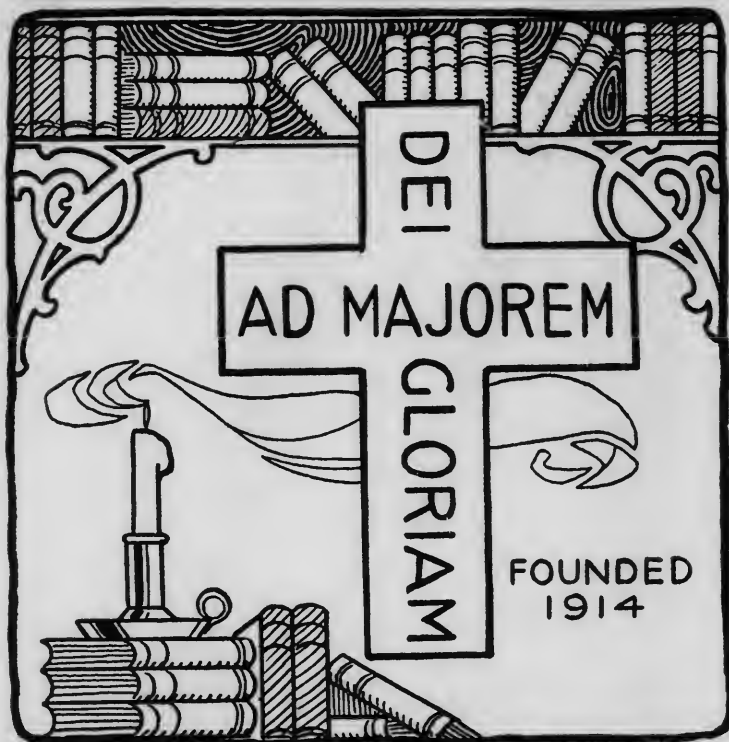


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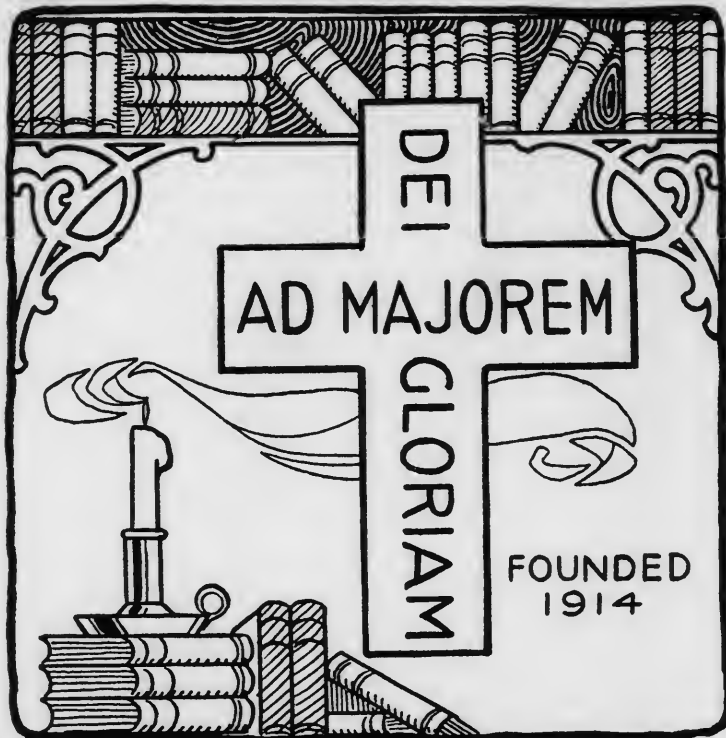
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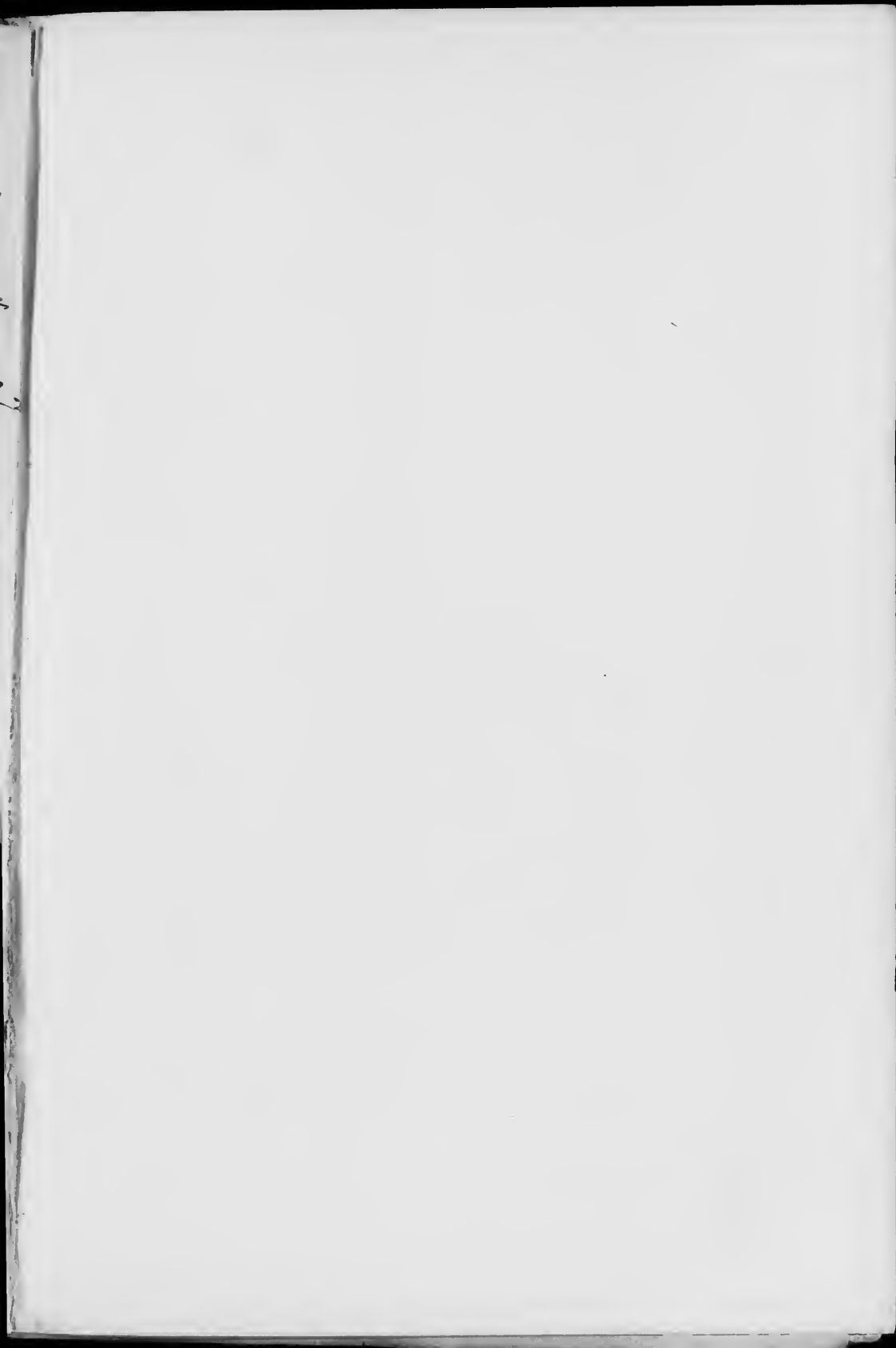
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new year & prosperity
in all your religious

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secration & increased de-
votion to the service of
God.

With kind regards,
Yours most truly,

J. G. Mayman

A. J. Smith Esq.
Weyfield







NEW WESLEYAN CHURCH
WILDER ROAD, ILFRACOMBE.

MEMORIAL STONE LAYING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5th, 1897.

Speakers: Rev. R. JENKIN, Chairman of the Exeter District,
Rev. JOHN GOULD, Chairman of the East Anglia District, and
other Ministers and Laymen.

Chair to be taken by R. T. SMITH, Esq., J.P.

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

Afternoon Ceremony at 3.30 o'clock.

DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT by Rev. J. PELLOW

HYMN

STONES WILL BE LAID AS FOLLOWS:

Mrs. BECKETT, & Miss A. SMITH, Whitchurch,

Mrs. LORAM, Exeter

Rev. JOHN GOULD, for Mrs. DUMMET, London

Miss LAUDER, for Barnstaple Friends

Mrs. GOULD, Ilfracombe

Mrs. COOK, for Women's Bible Class

Mr. W. PILE, for Men's Bible Class

Mr. W. E. MATHEWS, for Sunday School

The Children will place the amounts they have collected
on the Stone.

COLLECTION

ADDRESS. Rev. R. JENKIN, Chairman of the District

DOXOLOGY.

BENEDICTION.

Public Tea in the Market, at 6 o'clock

Public Meeting in Town Hall at 7 o'clock

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT by Rev. J. PELLOW

ADDRESSES by Rev. J. GOULD, Chairman of the East Devon
Anglia District, Rev. R. JENKIN, Chairman of the Exeter
District, Messrs J. BECKETT, J.P., A. LAUDER,
A. T. LORAM and others

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A HISTORY
OF
THE METHODIST REVIVAL OF
THE LAST CENTURY,
IN ITS RELATIONS TO
NORTH DEVON,
FROM THE FIRST VISIT OF THE WESLEYS TO
THE CENTENARY YEAR IN 1839.

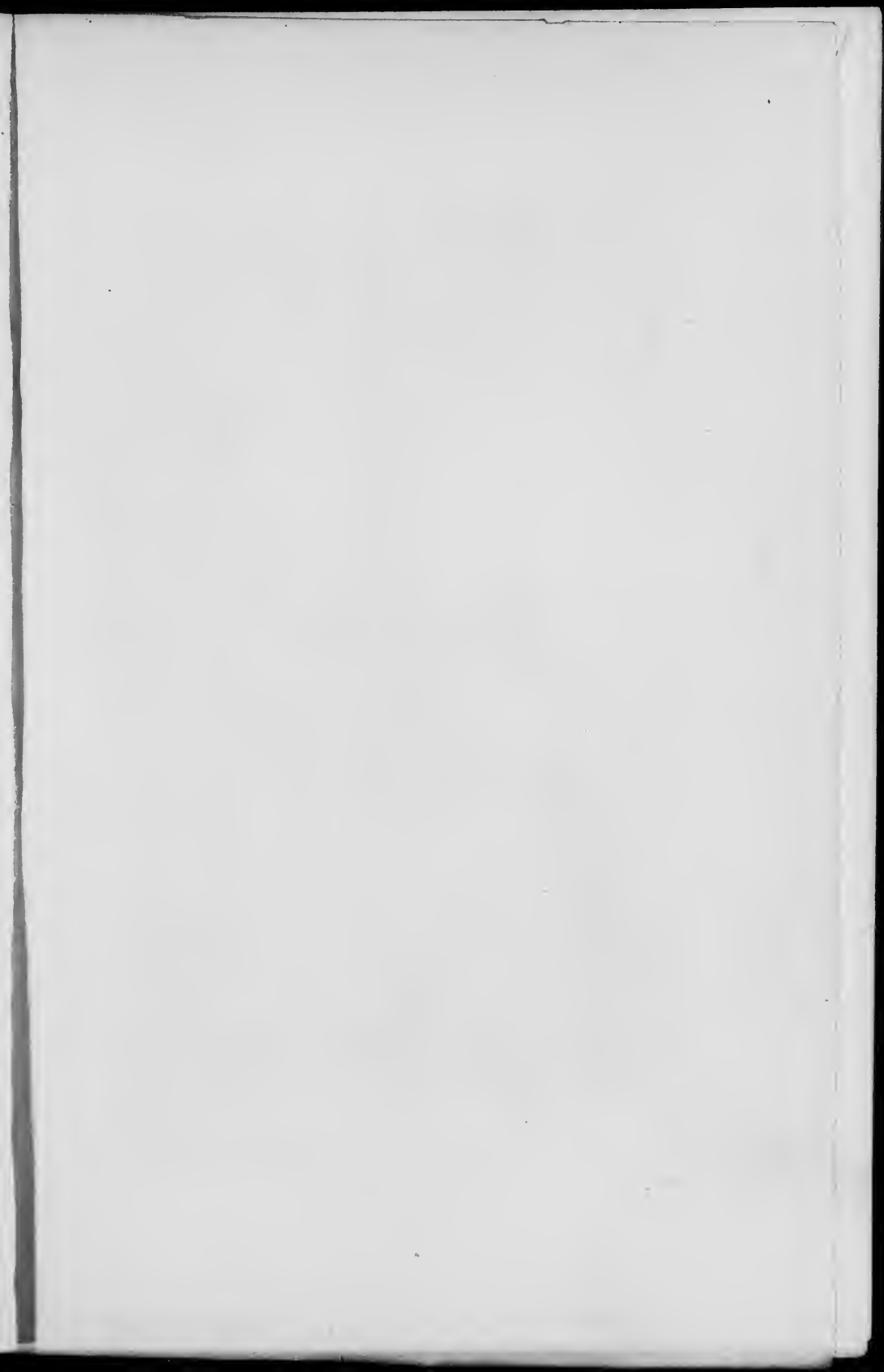
*With SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES, Extending
the History to 1898.*

By JOHN GOULD HAYMAN.

London :
WESLEYAN METHODIST BOOK ROOM,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1898.

HAYMAN, CHRISTY AND LILLY, LTD.,
PRINTERS,
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AND 20-22, ST. BRIDE STREET, E.C.





W. J. Southwood and Co.,
Engravers, Exeter.

NEW WESLEYAN CHURCH. ILFRACOMBE.

W. H. GOULD,
ARCHT.

PREFACE.



IN compiling the following memorials of Methodism in North Devon it has been the careful aim of the author to guard against the introduction of any sentiments which might have the semblance of narrowness or sectarianism. In writing the history of any section of the Christian Church it is difficult to avoid the frequent recurrence of its designation, and the phrases descriptive of its peculiar views and forms of government; but if "Methodist" and "Methodism" be regarded as generic terms, applicable in an extended sense to the religious awakening which had its origin at Oxford, in the early part of the eighteenth century, much of the objection to their frequent use in the following pages will be removed. The author has sought to make this little volume a history, not only of a denomination, but also of the general outgrowth of religious feeling and life which resulted from the labours of the early Methodist preachers in North Devon.

From the earliest dawn of Christianity the spiritual

life of the Church has been sustained by a succession of revivals, though they have seldom retained their vigour beyond the age in which their promoters flourished. The great religious movement with which the name of Wesley stands principally associated has, however, been marked by a permanency which points to those great principles and doctrines on which it is based, and which forms its spirit and life. The Methodist revival of the last century has proved to be the safeguard of our national institutions. While, on the one hand, the principles of infidelity were being sown broadcast throughout France, there was at the same time silently working among the lower classes of English Society a leaven of Christian influence that afterwards found expression in the religious energy and zeal of the early part of the present century, which, taking the population into account, was in advance even of that of the present day.

In contemplating the lives of the men to whom the Church is so greatly indebted, there is a romance about the simplicity and earnestness of purpose with which they devoted themselves to their missionary toil which, apart from the interest with which the Christian man must regard the subject, cannot fail to arrest general attention. It will be noticed that the early Methodist preachers were members of the Established Church: whilst they maintained their attachment to her, however, they sought the communion of the Methodists as affording greater scope for the expression of that fervour which so harmonised with the spirit of her liturgy

and homilies, but which was so little in consonance with the prevailing spirit and tastes of the clergy of that day.

In framing this history, the Author has largely consulted the records of early Methodism, and John and Charles Wesley's *Journals*, together with the *Minutes of Conference* extending over a century, and the *Methodist Magazines*. Among the works to which reference has also been made in the preparation of the volume, are the *Histories of Dr. George Smith and Dr. Abel Stevens*, and Jackson's *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*. Besides these authorities, the Writer has in his possession many interesting documents which throw light on the religious history of the district. In compiling the notices of different localities, the interest and assistance of gentlemen residing in the neighbourhood have been enlisted. Among these may be named the Messrs. Pearse, of Sticklepath and Hatherleigh; Mr. Thomas Evans, J.P., of Bideford; Mr. Samuel Pearce, of Torrington; the Rev. John Harris, of Sidmouth; Mr. Thomas Hillman, of Exeter; and Mr. James Courtice, of Landkey. In addition to these he has had the valuable assistance of the Rev. William Beal, now residing at Liskeard, who commenced his ministerial labours with the present century, and whose literary research has been of eminent service in the preparation of the work.

In conclusion, it has been the object of the writer to exhibit the influence of Christianity on the heart and life; hence especial prominence has been given to

those members of the different Societies who have by a consistent walk given practical evidence of the reality of the religion they have professed.

J. G. H.

Barnstaple, April, 1871.



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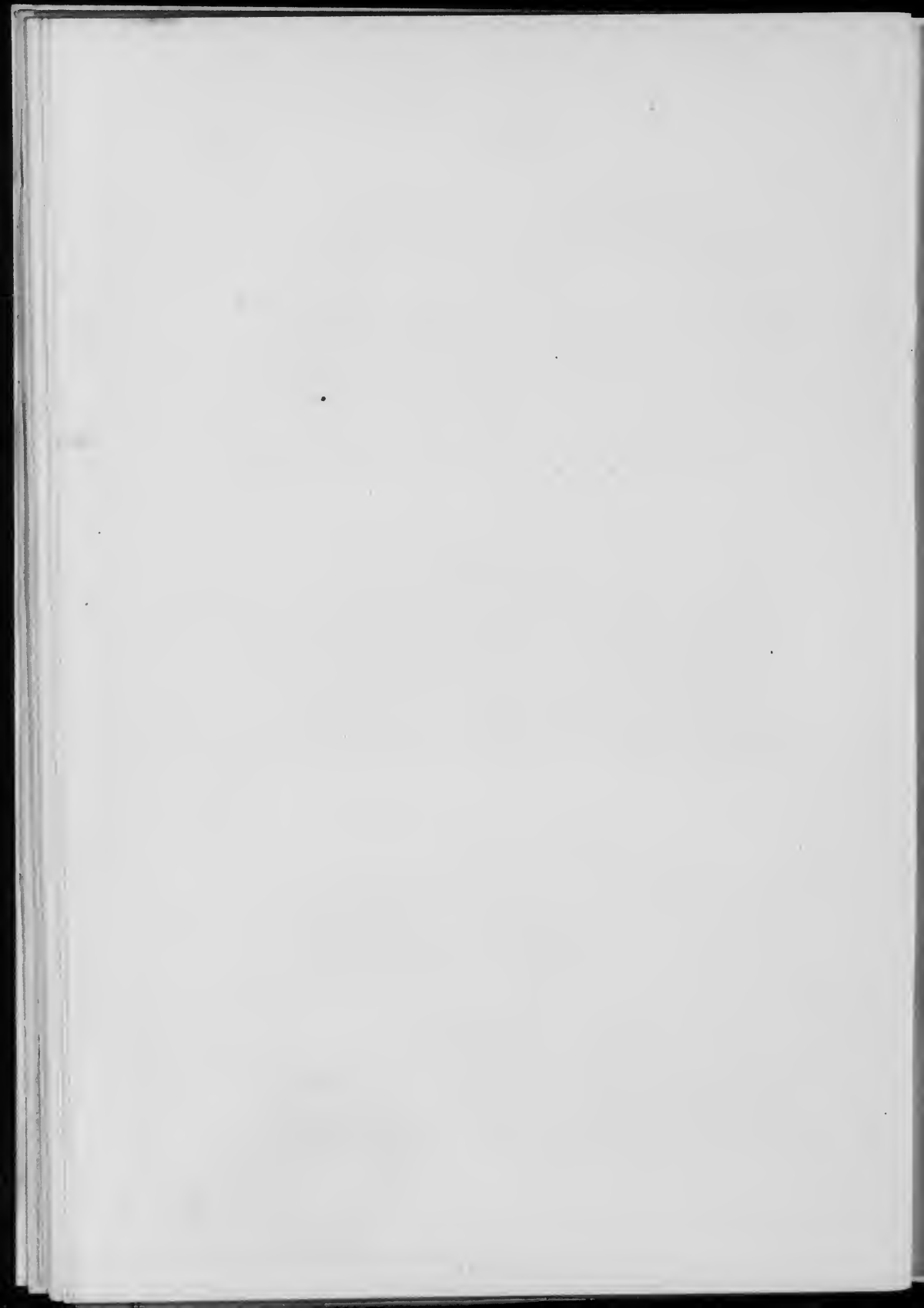
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WESLEYAN METHODISM

IN

NORTH DEVON.

CHAPTER I,

INTRODUCTION.

"Wild hills and rocks, stern monuments sublime
Of power Almighty, here the hoary sage
Long walked and worshipped in the morn of time
Nor needed he the aid of lettered page
To speak of God in that primæval age.
Those forms grotesque that crown the seaward steep,
The gloom, the silence which the waste doth keep,
The thunder's voice, and the hoarse tempest's rage,
The Druid filled with reverential awe."—CAPERN.

THESE are few districts in England which possess so many features of natural beauty, or so much of historic interest, as the north of Devon. On its eastern boundary lies the Forest of Exmoor, with its wild waste of hills overlooking the Bristol Channel, and valleys tracked by sparkling streams which break in miniature cascades, and make musical the glens and ravines of the adjacent coast. The simple moorland charms of this elevated range form a fitting prelude to the more majestic scenery of Lynmouth—its lofty cliffs

and thickly-wooded defiles—the spot of which Southey said it was only equalled by Cyntra and Arrabida, and of which Sydney Smith declared that there was nothing to equal it in the Mediterranean Sea. A few miles further down the coast are the beautiful valleys of Combmartin and Berrynarbor.

Here was born the pious and learned champion of Protestantism in the reign of Edward VI—Dr. Jewell—who distinguished himself by his able advocacy of the principles of the Reformation, both in his preaching and writing, and who, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, was appointed to the Bishopric of Salisbury. Near this spot, too, by a singular coincidence, was born Dr. Harding, Professor of Hebrew at the Oxford University, a man of great learning and ability, who was Bishop Jewell's bitterest opponent, seven tracts having been written by him in defence of Popery. The Bishop's vigorous reply to these was in such esteem that in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth, James I, Charles I., four successive Archbishops ordered it to be kept chained in all parish churches for public use; a copy of which is still preserved in the parish vestry at Tawstock.

The picturesque and attractive watering-place of Ilfracombe follows next in the line of coast, and its rugged and precipitous cliffs form the eastern wing of Barnstaple Bay, on either side of which lie the headlands of Morte Stone and Hartland Point.

William de Tracey, the murderer of the arbitrary Archbishop, Thomas A'Becket, having placed himself under the protection of the Bishop of Exeter, took refuge in this secluded coast, and in the south transept of Morthoe Church there is an ancient tomb, on the corner-stone of which is the incised figure of a priest

with a chalice in his hand, and an inscription in Lombardic letters—"Sir William de Tracey, git ici Deu del Alme eyt mercy." The opposite arm of the bay is Harty Point,—the reputed retreat of the hero of the legend of "King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table,"*—within which nestles the romantic fishing village of Clovelly.† The precipitous cliffs of the coast terminate at Abbotsham, from which the silver sands of Westward Ho! and its wonderful Ridge, stretch out to the mouth of the estuary. Extending inland from the Bay, the hills of North Devon gradually rise until they merge in the mountainous ranges which encircle the district.

Within this secluded district the Druids‡ retired before the Roman armies and Saxon hordes, and here they performed their superstitious rites after they had been suppressed in other parts of the land. To the fastnesses of this secluded tract of country King Alfred fled before the incursion of the Danes and matured his plans of resistance. On the banks of the Taw, also, Athelstan established the seat of his kingdom. The district bears many marks of the religious character of the inhabitants. It formed the northern frontier of the ancient Cornubia,—in the native language, Cor-nav§—"the sacred country," or nation of priests.

* On the "Round Table" were representations of the signs of the Zodiac. It is probable that the Druids, like the ancient Magi, observed the motions of the heavenly bodies from these heights, whence they could obtain an uninterrupted view of the hemisphere. Capes similarly situated in the Mediterranean Sea were dedicated to Hercules, and resorted to for astronomical observations.

† The following Gaelic derivation of the word Clovelly is suggested;—*Clo-bel-e*, (b dotted being pronounced as v.) Sea-Sun-Cair, or a place on the Sea dedicated to Bel or Beal. It might be otherwise interpreted *Clo-beul-e*, a sea-cair or place at the rivers' mouth. See *Reilly's Gaelic Dictionary*.

‡ *Cæsar's Commentaries*. Book 6, Chap. 13, 14.

§ The ancient inhabitants of Cheshire bore the same name. See *Old English Chronicles*.—Bohn's edition, pp. 441-4.

On the ancient monastic institutions of the Druids, after they had been converted to Christianity, were reared the religious orders and establishments which afterwards existed, the remains of which are still to be traced in the ruins and nomenclature of the country.

On its Western boundary is Hartland Abbey,—still in excellent preservation and retaining many of its original features,—which was sequestered at the time of the Reformation. This high land was known to the ancient navigators as the *Herculis promontorium*,—a headland which when first sighted and safely passed by venturous Phœnician mariners they dedicated to *Aur-Col*, (Hercules,) “the light of all,”—in honour of the sun, their guiding and protecting deity.*

On these high hills the Druid priests erected their altars, and offered human sacrifices to the shrine of Baal, whom they worshipped under the emblem of fire; and doubtless the sustaining of these lambent piles, on elevated barrows, as beacon-lights to the mariners, served to increase the veneration of the votaries of their religion. The hoary-headed granite torrs of Dartmoor, some of which are named “Bel” and “Mis” torrs, are standing memorials of the days when old men, as they “beheld the sun as it shined, and the moon walking in brightness,” brought their hands to their mouth, and adored. The days of the Maypole and festivities in honour of the Sun or “Grian,”† are fast passing away, but in many localities in the west bonfires are still kindled on Midsummer eve as if to perpetuate the memory of “Beal-teines,” when they honoured the sun in his highest altitude, though this

* *Herodotus*. Bohn's Edition, p. 112.

† Known in some districts as “Greine” (the genitive case).

old religious custom is rapidly disappearing from the west as well as on

"Teviot's silver tide, where
The glaring Baal fires beam no more."

In the second century, probably in the days of the Antonines, Christianity was introduced into Britain by representatives of the Church in Asia, devout soldiers, or good men, who had been scattered abroad by persecution. It had thus obtained early, and perhaps general, reception, when it was suddenly swept away, with the language itself, by the invasion of the Anglo-Saxons in A.D. 452, and almost entirely obliterated.

Towards the end of the sixth century, Ethelbert, King of Kent, the most considerable of the Saxon princes, having married Bertha, the daughter of the King of Paris, a Christian, Gregory the Great, the Roman Pontiff, availed himself of the circumstance, and devised the conversion of the Heathen Saxons to the Christian faith. He sent Augustine and his associates to accomplish the work; but, though great results followed this enterprise, it is questionable whether the politico-religious policy of these missionaries did not retard rather than advance the progress of a pure religion, which had already made great advances in the nation by the efforts of Columba, a Christian presbyter of Ireland, and his associates.

When Augustine entered on his work in the south of England he was advised by Gregory not to destroy the idol temples,* but to sprinkle them with holy water, and to place relics in them. On the Mäen-hirs, "high" or "long stones,"† with the circle at their head, the

* *Bede's Eccles. His.*—Bohn's Edition, pp. 34 and 36, pp. 55 and 56. *Six Old English Chronicles*, p. 275.

† On an elevated situation at Broadgate, Barnstaple, there is now standing one of these "long stones," and the estate adjoining is known by

form of the cross was to be made so that the people might continue to resort to those sacred shrines at which they had been accustomed to assemble for worship. So, also, churches were to be erected on the sites near the old British lans, or the Roman lanndians of Apollo and Diana, and the other heathen deities. Sun-wells were to be converted into baptismal fonts. The occurrence of the names of Holi-well and Hol-well in many parishes in North Devon, indicate the situation of such places of religious resort* in that district.

That faithful portion of the early Briton Church which still maintained amid the Cambrian mountains the doctrine and practice transmitted from their forefathers, persevered in rejecting the Papal authority, and in the year A.D. 607, Ethelfrid, a Saxon king, defeated the Welsh army, slew a thousand monks, and left Bangor, which had been one of the chief seats of British learning, a heap of ruins.†

The same attitude was maintained by the native church in the West, for up to the termination of Bede's history—A.D. 731—"no Roman Bishop had been appointed to the people of Devon," and it was not until A.D. 905 that Edward the Elder, the son of Alfred, appointed Eadulph the first Bishop of Crediton.‡ In the

that name. Probably on this seat of Druid worship was afterwards founded the important Abbey of Pilton, of which some remains may now be seen.

* The superstitious customs connected with these holy places are still observed in the north of Devon. At Northmolton there exists a "holy-well," to which, on Ascension Day or Holy Thursday, sick persons resort from a considerable distance to wash in its waters, assembling before daybreak in order that they may be the earliest to participate in its virtues. Around this spot also are the "One Barrow," "Two Barrow," and "Five Barrow" Downs (relics of Druid superstition), where, on the tombs of celebrated chieftains, were erected mounds on which was kindled the sacred flame in honour of these heroes and their divinity.

† Bede, pp. 68-71. *Six Chronicles*, p. 276.

‡ Pedler's *Anglo-Saxon Episcopate*, pp. 5, 12, 56, 161.

days that succeeded the Saxon era, under the rule of the Normans, the spurious Christianity which was professed underwent many changes; but the latter refused to acknowledge the claim of Gregory VII. to hold kings as vassals, threatening to dissolve their connection with the Roman See, rather than concede this; and the matter was at length compromised by the Bishops doing homage to the king for their temporalities.

During the three succeeding centuries different classes of ecclesiastics, represented by Thomas A'Becket on the one side, and Grosseteste and Wycliffe on the other, exerted their influence on the nation. Various monastic orders also arose and declined, "each falling into the snare against which its primitive protest was directed," till, in the year 1521, Ignatius Loyola initiated the "Society of the Jesuits." The selfish policy and love of personal aggrandisement which characterised these various orders of ecclesiastics,—the arrogant assumption of an ignorant priesthood, who neither read the Scriptures themselves or allowed the people to do so,—the institution of the sale of indulgences to replenish the coffers of Pope Leo X., the discovery of the art of printing, and the consequent advance of intelligence amongst all classes of society,—these and other facts at length awoke the slumbering nations, and the light of the Reformation dawned upon the world.

The features of historic interest which are thus indicated, North Devon possessed in common with other parts of the land. Lengthened details of its general religious history—especially in ancient times—will not comport with the design of the present work. A rapid survey of the most conspicuous events may, however, be both interesting and useful.

In 1520, Luther, at the gate of Wittenburg Castle, cut the last tie which bound him to the Church of Rome, by committing to the flames the Papal bull denouncing against him the doom of excommunication. The influence of the Reformation, which had shaken the religious opinions of the greater part of Europe, was not unfelt by the people of England, among whom the doctrines of Wycliffe had been silently working.

The modern history of religion in our country with which in these pages we have especially to deal, may be regarded as dating from the times immediately preceding the Revolution which established William the Third on the throne of England as a guarantee for the civil and religious Protestant liberties of the land; and, perhaps, more especially from the passing of the famous Act of Uniformity in the reign of Charles II. In the effects resulting from that unwise and iniquitous measure, North Devon had its full share; and a brief notice of them will prepare the way for our history of the introduction and establishment of Wesleyan Methodism into that division of the county.

Among the much-valued clergymen ejected in Exeter and the North of Devon were Messrs. Ford, Atkins, Powell, and others, in the city; Jonathan Hanmer, rector of Bishopstawton and Lecturer at Barnstaple; Oliver Peard, rector of Ashford; Nathaniel Mather, Barnstaple; John Bartlett, Fremington; William Clide, Instow; Anthony Down, Northam; William Bartlett, Bideford; John Howe, Torrington; etc., etc. Most of these devoted men, though exposed to fines and imprisonment, and forbidden to come within five miles of any corporate town, ministered to their sorrowing people in their places of concealment—often wild and lonely retreats,—and by their instru-

mentality, in a large degree, genuine religion was preserved in the land.

These severe measures produced a withering influence on the Established Church, as well as on religion generally. Released from the salutary influence which Puritanism exerted in the Establishment, full licence was now given to those loose views of morality which Charles had acquired on the Continent. A tide of profanity and vice swept over the nation, and in accordance with the king's views that "Presbyterianism was no religion for a gentleman," a profession of Christianity was only maintained as a matter of decency and convenience, and in so far as it might promote sinister and political ends. The life-giving Spirit had left the hallowed places from which devout men had been driven out, and the little true religion which remained in the nation was chiefly found in the at-length tolerated churches of the Presbyterian and other dissenting bodies.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Presbyterians introduced many changes, first in doctrine, and next in church government. In 1708, James Peirce,* one of the most learned ministers of that denomination, through his intercourse with William Whiston, a Professor at the Cambridge and Utrecht Universities, became indoctrinated with Arian opinions, about which time he associated himself with the Presbyterian Church at Exeter, at that period composed of several congregations. Among the Ministers appointed to the Church, in addition to Mr. Peirce, were Joseph Hallet, John Withers, and John Lavington. Suspicions arose as to the orthodoxy of some of these, and a scrutiny led

* *Whiston's Memoirs*, pp. 139, 143, 220, 221. *Western Inquisition*, pp. 6, 20, 22. *Peirce's Sermons*.

to the ejection of Messrs. Hallet, Withers, and Peirce from the pulpits of the Presbyterian Church. The spirit in which this was done not only called forth much sympathy but also led to the provision of a suitable place of worship in which the ministry of the ejected ones might be continued. On the Sabbath day following their expulsion—March 15th, 1719—Mr Peirce began his ministry in some selected place in Exeter, and on December 27th of the same year a new Meeting-House was opened in Mint Lane, on the site of an old Benedictine Monastery, known as St. Nicholas's Priory. This division soon had the effect of causing Presbyterianism as a system of church government to die out. In 1812, about ninety years after its erection, the Arian Mint-Lane Chapel was purchased and rebuilt by the Wesleyan Methodists, and it continues to be their property to the present time.


The close connection of what were styled the Independent churches with Presbyterians could not fail to give them the same Arian tendencies. A reference to this is made in a published sketch of the rise and progress of the Congregational Church in Bideford, read at the opening of the Lavington Chapel in that town, of which the following is an extract:—"Throughout a succession of ministers, reaching over two centuries, in connection with the Great Meeting House* in this town, it is pleasing to remember that they have all been sound in the faith, and while the Arian heresy infected and depopulated so many other churches in this county, to this Church† the pure Gospel has always been faithfully proclaimed."

* The Little Meeting House was situate in High Street, Bideford, and the last Minister before its close in 1760 was a professed Arian.

† The ministry of the venerable Samuel Lavington, the author of *Sacramental Meditations* and other works, extended from 1752 to 1807, and

As is well known, religion had, from these causes, sunk to a very low ebb; but a gracious re-acting influence and power was in preparation, and soon mercifully appeared in the labours of the Wesleys and Whitefield. As the tenets of the latter harmonised with the views held by the Congregational Churches, the influence of his labours was especially felt by them, and this more particularly in raising up an earnest and evangelical ministry; whilst the mission of the Wesleys was to evangelize the rude and unlettered masses of their countrymen. With what effect they thus laboured is seen in the mighty changes which have been and are being accomplished, both at home and abroad, by their agency and that of their successors.

exerted a hallowing influence on his people, who were "distinguished for deep and fervent piety." The work was sustained by his son-in-law and successor, Mr. Rooker, for nearly thirty years beyond that period.



CHAPTER II.



FIRST VISITS OF THE WESLEYS.

"In labours more abundant . . . In journeyings often. . . in perils by mine own countrymen: . . . in perils in the city: . . . in perils among false brethren: . . . Besides that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."—ST. PAUL.

THE Home-Mission work of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley may be said to date from the year 1739. At first they were permitted to occupy the pulpits of parish churches, and when these were closed against them they ministered to a too-long neglected people on commons and in public thoroughfares. Instead of being hailed as friends of the Established Church, however, rude mobs attempted to defeat their purpose, and to drive them from their work. Too frequently these proceedings were sanctioned and even initiated by persons whose office and station should have led to the discountenance and suppression of riot and violence; but it was pretended that the Wesleys were either Jacobites or Jesuits in disguise, and this was made a pretext for acts, the impolicy and injustice of which are now both seen and acknowledged.

The *Journals* of John Wesley contain records of several visits to Devonshire. The death of Samuel Wesley, in November, 1739, at Tiverton brought John

and Charles to that town on a visit of condolence to the widow of their departed brother. Mr. Samuel Wesley* was at the time of his death head master of Tiverton Grammar School, previous to receiving which appointment he was a junior master at Westminster. The Tiverton School was founded and endowed by Mr. Blundell, in the early part of the seventeenth century, for training godly young men for the ministry of the Church, and has always held a high position among the public schools of the country. Mr. Samuel Wesley had little sympathy with the religious views held by his brothers, and though he promoted their missionary enterprise in Georgia, he was slow to receive the doctrine of "divine assurance" which the latter had happily realised and now boldly preached. John Wesley makes the following entry in his *Journal* on the occasion of his brother's death:—"Wednesday, November 21st.—This afternoon I came to Tiverton. My poor sister is sorrowing almost as one without hope; but we could not but rejoice at hearing from one who had attended my brother that several days before

* Samuel Wesley was a man of keen wit and strong sense (*Wesley Family*, p. 233). As a poet he is entitled to a distinguished niche in the Temple of Fame. He published a quarto volume of his poems under the title of *The Battle of the Sexes*, from which Dr. Johnson gives a quotation in the "Grammar" affixed to his *Dictionary*, as being the best specimen of the kind of poetry to which he refers. There are eight of his hymns in the *Wesleyan Hymn Book*, among them the general favourites—

'The morning flowers display their sweets,'

(written on the death of a young lady,) and

'The Lord of Sabbath let us praise.'

We quote the following facetious lines on *Watts' Psalms*, extracted from one of his works;—

'Even Watts a form of praise can choose—
For prayer he throws it by;
Crutches to walk he can refuse
But uses them to fly."

he went hence God had given him a calm and full assurance of his interest in Christ. O, may everyone who opposes it be convinced that this doctrine is of God!" With the strong conviction contained in this impressive utterance the Wesleys went forth on their great commission to revive in the Church of England the great doctrines of the Reformation, and to preach the "glad tidings" of salvation to the neglected masses of their countrymen.

In the autumn of 1743 the Wesleys made their first visit to Cornwall in the pursuit of their evangelical labours. Their route lay through Sampford Courtenay, near Okehampton, an old Roman Station, still bearing evidences of its military origin. About half-a-mile from this is situated the village of Sticklepath, on the northern side of Dartmoor, the first place in Devonshire which gave a welcome to Wesley and his coadjutors. At this period the means of locomotion were of the most primitive description. It was now some 125 years before the turnpike-road to Okehampton was cut, and wheeled vehicles were unknown in the district. Farmer's wives rode to market on horse-back with their well filled panniers, followed by their husbands with strings of pack-horses, laden with grain and other farm produce; or, perhaps, farmer and "dame" rode together on one trusty horse, accoutred with saddle and pillion,—the string of pack-horses behind being led by the servant man attired in his smartest smock.

On the 22nd of September, 1743,—the year preceding the first Methodist Conference—there were seen two men on horse-back, just emerging from Greenhill-lane, and carefully descending Sticklepath hill. One of them had the habit and appearance of a clergyman, about 40 years of age,—the other was younger, and

seemingly one accustomed to labour. Just at that time an elderly man wearing the dress of a Quaker, was walking up the hill towards the Lady's Well, accompanied by three others. The Friend accosted the strangers, and at once recognizing the clergyman, asked him,—“Is not thy name John Wesley?”

Wesley's account of this visit is thus recorded in his *Journal*:—“1743, Sept. 22.—As we were riding through a village called Sticklepath one stopped me in the street and asked me abruptly ‘Is not thy name John Wesley?’ Immediately two or three others came up, and told me I must stop there. I did so, and before we had spoken many words our souls took acquaintance with each other. I found they were called Quakers, but that hurt me not, seeing the love of God was in their hearts.”

A few weeks after, John Nelson visited these Friends. He was with them on the Sabbath, and speaks of some awakening under his preaching.

In the following Spring,—April 1, 1744—Wesley says:—“I rode to Sticklepath. At one I preached in an open space on, ‘This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.’ At five I preached again. Many of the poor people followed me to the house, and we could not consent to part till we had spent another hour in exhortation, and prayer, and thanksgiving.” He preaches the next morning at five, and then proceeds on his journey to Launceston. On his return, on the 16th of the same month, he says: “In the afternoon I came to Sticklepath. I preached at five in the evening—the house was crowded. After a short exhortation and prayer I commended them to the grace of God.”

In July of the same year Charles Wesley visited

Sticklepath. Speaking of the Quakers he says: "My heart was drawn out to them in prayer and love, and I felt that 'He that doeth the will of my Father the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.'" On this visit he was accompanied by Mr. Meriton, a Church clergyman, and John Slocombe, who afterwards became an itinerant minister. They were also met here by Mr. Benet, rector of Laneast, who entertained them the next day at his house near Trewint.*

On the 2nd of September, 1746, we find John Wesley again at Sticklepath, and on the 16th of the same month another visit is recorded. One cannot but be struck with the marvellous character of the journeys made by him,—well compared to the rapid progress made by travellers on swift dromedaries in Eastern countries. In his day the roads were most wretchedly kept, being covered with deep ruts and large stones; but mark the rapidity with which this extraordinary itinerant speeds his way to preach the everlasting Gospel! Just refer to his *Journal*. On Monday, September 1st, he starts from Bristol to Middlesay, near Bridgewater. Early next morning he is off to Stickle-

* A reference to Charles Wesley's *Journal* at this date will illustrate the earnestness with which he entered on his evangelical labours. Referring to his visit to Cornwall, he observes, "What an amazing work hath God done in one year. In vain do the pulpits ring of Popery, madness and enthusiasm. The whole country is alarmed and gone after the sound of the Gospel." His concluding entry will show the results of his visit to that hitherto dark and neglected population.—"August 5. I preached my farewell sermon at Gwennap to an innumerable multitude whom I warned and invited with threatenings and promises. I spoke on for two hours, yet knew not how to let them go. Such sorrow and love as they expressed the world will not believe, though a man declared it unto them. My brother Thomson, a clergyman from the borders of the county, was astonished, and confessed he had never seen the like. With great difficulty we got through them at last, and set out on our journey. Several men and women kept pace with our horses for two or three miles, and then parted, in body, not in mind."

path, through drenching rain, and reached the village the same evening. The next day (Wednesday) he is at Plymouth, then rapidly makes his way through Cornwall, visiting towns and villages on the south coast, and on Saturday we find him at St. Just, near Land's End. On his return (taking the north side of the county,) he leaves St. Ives early in the afternoon, and preaches in the open air at a place called Bray, at six, and later in the evening at Sithney, the moon shining full on the congregation ere the service is ended. On Sunday morning, at the same place, he preaches again at eight; at Port Kellis at one; at Gwennap Pit at four; and at night we find him at St. Columb. On Monday morning he preaches at Camel-ford; at mid-day at St. Mary Week Church, near Stratton; and in the evening he is at Laneast Church, below Launceston. On Tuesday he preaches in the evening at Plymouth Dock, and also the next morning (Wednesday) at five o'clock. On the same day at ten he addresses a large concourse of people in a field near Tavistock; in the afternoon he preaches at Sticklepath; and at nine at night, weary and exhausted, he reaches Exeter.

In 1745, Wesley first passed through North Devon on his way from Cornwall to South Wales. On Tuesday, July 16, of that year, his "Journals" contain a record of his having read prayers and preached in the parish churches of Tresmere, St. Mary Week, and Tamerton, in the north of Cornwall. On the 27th of the same month he rode to Rev. Mr. Thomson's, at Brinsworthy, near Barnstaple, an old college friend; and on the following evening crossed Exmoor on his way to Minehead, where he took ship across the Channel.

In 1750—five years after this visit—North Devon

first appears in the Minutes of Conference as a Circuit. The name of the first preacher appointed to superintend it is not mentioned, but Mr. Roberts appears as the Minister in 1753.

William Roberts was a native of Illogan, in Cornwall, where his parents held a respectable position. Early in life he displayed a genius for literature and music, and at the age of fourteen had made considerable proficiency in the higher branches of learning. He zealously pursued his studies in after years, and achieved high attainment in the Greek and Hebrew languages. In the year 1744, when he was only sixteen years of age, as he was engaged in Divine Worship at the parish church, his mind was unusually affected, and from that time he fully devoted himself to God. He embraced every opportunity of impressing on his young friends the necessity and importance of a consistent religious life. His conversion to God was sudden, but nevertheless genuine. He soon united himself with the Methodist Society in that place, and, at the earnest solicitation of the people, he was induced at first to give "a word of exhortation" and afterwards fully to devote himself to the work of the ministry.

He remained in Cornwall until he was twenty-two years of age, when he went to reside at Tiverton, where his deep fervent piety and brilliant talents soon secured for him a large and respectable circle of acquaintances, who received him as a messenger sent from heaven to shew them the way of salvation. During his residence there he succeeded in introducing Methodism into Northmolton, between which place and Tiverton there was considerable commercial intercourse, the former having at that time a large trade in wool and yarns, and the latter being an extensive manufacturing town.

In the year 1750, Mr. Roberts was appointed as an itinerant preacher to a Circuit in the North of England. On his journey thither he preached wherever an opportunity presented itself; and when he reached Durham, the power of God so manifestly attended his ministry that he was induced, after obtaining Mr. Wesley's consent, to remain there. He succeeded in establishing a successful cause, having accomplished which he proceeded, in the following year, to his appointment at Newcastle.

During his absence in the North, considerable jealousy was excited at Tiverton, the result of the increasing influence which the Methodist community was exerting in that town and neighbourhood, and an organised attempt was made by a series of violent and cruel persecutions, to drive "the new sect which was everywhere spoken against," from the district. They were assailed in the public streets with profane and vulgar epithets by the lower orders, who were instigated and encouraged by the ignorant and bigoted of higher rank. Public preaching and other religious services were interrupted, and, almost overwhelmed by the trouble which had so unexpectedly come upon them, the Methodist people unanimously entreated that Mr. Roberts might return to them, to counsel them in their difficulties. He accordingly hastened to their help, and soon found that he had work sufficient to do. The services of Ward, a clergyman of the Church of England, who had disgraced his office, and no longer held a living, were enlisted to preach against the Methodists in the public streets; but the intemperate character of his addresses, his dissolute life, his profane conversation and companionship, soon rendered him a reproach to those who had given him their countenance, and

tended rather to promote than to damage the interests of the cause espoused by the persecuted ones: nevertheless, the same personal insults were continued, and falsehoods of every kind that rage and malice could invent were industriously propagated to hold up Mr. Roberts and his hearers to contempt and ridicule. One of the clergymen of the Established Church publicly repelled him from the Lord's Table, and finding that this did not succeed in driving him out of the town, the aid of the law was brought into requisition. At one session upwards of thirty indictments for establishing conventicles, holding unlawful assemblies, etc., were preferred; but, by the assistance of an able counsel and the wisdom and moderation of the Recorder, these efforts recoiled on thier adversaries, and for fifteen months the Methodists of Tiverton pursued their mission in peace. The clergyman (Ward) being defeated in his designs in the town, continued his persecutions in several country villages, till, having filled up the measure of his iniquities, he was arrested in his career, and suddenly summoned to appear before the tribunal of God. He was crossing the Forest of Exmoor, in order to attack the Methodists at Northmolton when he sank to his waist in a bog, and a fall of snow happening in the night, he was not discovered until several days after. When found he was quite dead—his body standing erect, nearly up to the waist in mire.*

In 1753, Mr. Roberts appears in the Minutes of Conference as the regularly-appointed Minister to the North of Devon, but soon after this he gave up the itinerant life, married, and settled at Tiverton. For several years he carried on an extensive business, but

* Atmore's Methodist Memorial, p. 346-355.

although he was thus diligently employed he devoted much of his time to the work of the ministry, preaching often in the country villages, and generally three or four times a week in Tiverton, for upwards of thirty years. In process of time, the consistency of his conduct, and his intellectual ability commanded the respect even of those who had been his enemies; many of his persecutors desired and obtained forgiveness at his hands; some, who, in after years were reduced to poverty and affliction, he generously helped and relieved; and his society was sought after as an entertaining and instructive companion. After the death of his wife in 1791, he retired from business, and in his old age his numerous friends showed their esteem for him by generously ministering to his comfort. About three years before his death, a gentleman in the vicinity of Tiverton, who had received much benefit from Mr. Roberts' ministry, offered to leave him the bulk of his property which was not less than £10,000; but he declined the liberal proposal, expressing his unwillingness to be burthened with the responsibility of distributing so large a sum in the decline of life. On Friday, December 8th, 1797, as one in a sleep, without the slightest emotion, he calmly yielded up his spirit to God.

In 1757, Wesley again visited North Devon. The following is an extract from his "Journal" of this date:—"Sunday, October 2, I rode to Mary-week. A large congregation was gathered there, many of whom came seven or eight miles. The house stands in the midst of orchards and meadows, surrounded by gently rising hills. I preached on the side of a meadow, newly mown, to a deeply-attentive people.—Monday, 3. I rode to Bideford* but did not reach it until after

* The Rev. George Whitefield paid a visit to Bideford in the early part of

five, the hour appointed for my preaching: so I began without delay in an open part of the street, where we alighted. One man made a little noise at first, but he was easily silenced: all the rest (a large number) quietly attended, though the wind was piercing cold, while I opened and applied "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Tuesday, 4. Between twelve and one the next day I reached Northmolton, and, finding the congregation ready, began immediately. There have been great tumults here since I saw them before, but God has now rebuked the storm. When the gentry would neither head nor pay the mob, the poor rabble were quiet as lambs. We rode to Tiverton in the afternoon. On the following three days I saw as many of the Society as I could."

In 1758, Charles Wesley paid a visit to the surviving members of his brother Samuel's family, preaching with his wonted energy and spirit at various places both in going and returning. His brother's widow was now dead, but a daughter who survived her, and who married a surgeon named Earl, resided at Barnstaple, in the house opposite the "Fortescue Hotel." He gives an interesting account of this journey, and its results, in a letter to his wife, dated from Barnstaple. It would appear from the text of this letter that he was still suffering from the effects of a dangerous fall which he had in the preceding Spring. On Sunday, September 3rd, of this year, he states that he preached at Tiverton. After morning service he and his congregation attended church, and received the Sacrament. He observes in

the Rev. Samuel Lavington's ministry, but his evangelistic efforts were regarded by the latter rather as an intrusion, and as there was danger of a dissension, Mr. Whitefield was advised to leave.

the letter to his wife: "The minister administered to me first, as if he wished to gain the hearts of our people." In the evening of the same day he preached in the Market. "Thousands were present," he observes, "and received the Word gladly. I explained and applied—'The poor have the gospel preached unto them.' My mouth was opened to make known the mystery of salvation." On the next morning, after preaching at five o'clock to the Society, he set out on horseback for Barnstaple, but was driven back by the rain. "September 5th," he says, "Took horse at seven. To escape a shower, I baited at a little alehouse. Gave a word of advice to the poor ignorant landlord and his daughter, and went on my way (and a vile one it was) without any more rain, till we came, between twelve and one, to Northmolton, twenty measured miles from Tiverton. I dined on a cup of tea, which I had taken care to bring with me, and shut myself up till night, when I preached the gospel with more comfort and life than I have done since I left Bristol. Not a word seemed to be lost upon them. The seed fell upon good ground. I had a feast with them, so I wanted none elsewhere. My friendly old host gave me the best he had, but the bacon and hen were such as my teeth could not penetrate. However, our clean, warm beds made us amends.* I found the room full at five, and exhorted them to come boldly to the throne of mercy and grace." He then went through Southmolton on to

* The house is still standing, near the Bridge at Northmolton, and the rooms in which the Wesleys and their preachers were probably entertained remain as they were a hundred years ago. It is now occupied by a miller. The room on the ground floor is very spacious, and at the head of the long table, where the minister probably stood to preach, is a cupboard, to the leaf of which is attached an impressive tract, under which is painted the initials "M. T.—1764." From the bridge, John Wesley was accustomed to preach to the congregations which assembled from the surrounding parishes.

Barnstaple. "In less than two miles' riding," he says, "a heavy shower drove us to take shelter in a public house. Two miles further, a second storm threatened to wet us to the skin. We fled towards the park-keeper's lodge, near Lord Fortescue's, and the woman invited us in. My mare took possession of the porch. Our hostess had just lost her husband. I gave something to one of her four children, and a word of advice to the widow." He reached Barnstaple at noon, and stopped at the "Fortescue Arms." Whilst in the town he had a gratifying interview with his brother's daughter, her husband, and children. He was most hospitably entertained, and he remarks in his Diary, "I have now had several conferences with my niece and her husband, and several walks with him. Their frights and prejudices vanish apace: they even venture to take the lion by the beard. I pray with the family morning and evening, and am quite convinced God has sent me to this house." On September 10th, he says, "The people of this place are abundantly civil, not excepting the clergy. I am invited by them also, but I decline visiting them, as I can neither smoke nor drink, nor talk their language.* Yesterday, I could not refuse drinking tea with an old friend and relation of my brother and sister, whose grandfather, like mine, was turned out on St. Bartholomew's day.† She and

* While Charles Wesley expressed himself thus strongly in reference to the clergy, in writing to his wife, he was in public at the very time most strenuous in his endeavours to sustain his brother and the Conference in their attachment to the Church. Had it not been for his interposition at this time, and, later, in 1783, the various Methodist Societies would naturally have assumed an independent existence by sanctioning the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in their numerous chapels and preaching houses.

† The Wesleys' grandfathers, both on the father's and mother's side, were ejected from the Church on the passing of the Act of Uniformity. Mrs. Susannah Wesley's maiden name was Annesley, and her father, who

several others desire to hear me preach, but preaching is not my present business. . . . I have been at Church, but not much edified. Oh! what a famine of the Word! How long shall God's people perish for lack of knowledge?" Later on in the letter he says, "I am engaged, by promise, to bestow a week upon the societies at or near Tiverton." In his letter to Tiverton, informing his friends of his intended departure for that place, he gives an account of the separation from his niece at Barnstaple:—"Sept. 12.—Yesterday morning I hardly tore myself from poor Phill. Her husband walked with me a mile, and parted with tears. They forced a servant on me as far as Northmolton, fifteen miles from Barnstaple. The afternoon was all my own. At night I declared the end of the Lord's coming, 'that we might have life.' The door was again wide open. I bestowed an hour upon my host and his family in singing, conference, and prayer. Tuesday morning I rose at four, preached at five, set out after breakfast, and reached Tiverton, twenty miles from Northmolton, by one."

The only other recorded visit of the Founders of Methodism to North Devon, of which any extended notice is given, is found in John Wesley's Journal of 1765, of which the following is an abstract:—

"1765, Tuesday, Sept. 3. I rode to Tiverton, and on Wednesday, the 4th, I rode on to North Tawton, a village where several of our preachers had preached occasionally. About six I went to the door of our inn; but I had hardly ended the psalm, when a clergyman came,

was nearly related to the Anglesea family, was a lecturer in Cripplegate, London. His sermons were published in the celebrated "Morning Exercises," and during the rigorous enforcement of the Act of Uniformity, he was the counsellor and benefactor of the persecuted Puritans. John Westley was also ejected from his living at Whitchurch.

with two or three (by the courtesy of England called) gentlemen. After I had named my text, I said, 'There may be some truths which concern some men only ; but this concerns all mankind.' The Minister cried out, 'That is false doctrine—that is predestination.' Then the roar began, to second which they had brought a huntsman with his hounds: but the dogs were wiser than the men ; for they could not bring them to make any noise at all. One of the gentlemen supplied their place. He assured us he was such, or none would have suspected it ; for his language was as base, foul, and porterly, as ever was heard at Billingsgate. Dog, rascal, puppy, and the like terms adorned almost every sentence. Finding there was no probability of a quiet hearing, I left him the field, and withdrew to my lodging."




CHAPTER III.



THE GOULD FAMILIES.

"So, one by one the dear old faces fade,
Hands wave their far farewell while beckoning us
Across the river all must pass alone.
We stand and gaze upon their shining track,
Until the two worlds mingle in a mist,
And the two lives are molten into one:
Familiar things grow phantom-like remote;
Things visionary draw familiar near;
The picture that we gaze on seems the real
Looking at us, and we the shadows that pass."—GERALD MASSEY.

BOUT six miles from Northmolton is situated the village of Brayford, remarkable as becoming the centre of missionary enterprise to an extended neighbourhood. In it resided several families whose early reception of Methodism is marked by many interesting features.

In the year 1765, four young men, all bearing the name of Gould, though members of different families, united themselves with the Methodist Society at Northmolton, viz., William and Joshua Gould, of Grass-parks, in the parish of Charles: John Gould, also of Charles; and Joseph Gould of the adjoining parish of High Bray. As they were closely identified with the cause in that neighbourhood, and subsequently became centres of influence in different localities, a separate notice of each will not be uninteresting.

Mr. William Gould's family came originally from Gloucestershire, and settled in the parish of Charles, where they carried on a shoemaking business in connection with the farming of a small estate at Grassparks. Mr. Gould's father had been accustomed to attend, with other farmers of the neighbourhood, the preaching of the Wesleys and the early Methodists at Northmolton, and the son was thus early brought under religious influence. He possessed much natural amiability, and on his conversion to God, he exhibited a consistency of deportment and steady attachment to the principles he had espoused, which marked him out for a position of usefulness in the Church. When Methodist preaching was introduced into Brayford, in 1777-8, he became Leader of the Society class there, which office he continued to hold for forty years. He was highly respected not only by the members of his own communion, but by all with whom he came in contact. His active career of usefulness was brought to a close in 1817. The Rev. William Sleigh, the Minister of the Circuit, preached a funeral sermon at his death; and an Epitaph was written by Mrs. Sleigh which affords abundant evidence of the esteem in which he was generally held. It appeared in a volume of Poems published by that lady, and was as follows:—

“Beneath this stone a relic lies
Of one whose spirit dwells on high,—
Of one who, while this earth he trod,
Like Enoch, walked and talked with God.
Serene he passed the vale of life,
The friend of peace, the foe of strife;
Meek, simple, upright, and sincere,
Foes were constrained the saint to revere.”

Mr. Joshua Gould, a younger brother of the above, married the daughter of Mrs. Amos Joce, of Hole Farm, in the parish of Landkey, and, at the mother's

death inherited the estate. Mrs. Joce was one of the earliest converts to Methodism at Northmolton, and is spoken of as having been an eminently Christian woman. In the year 1787, two years after his removal to Hole, Mr. Gould joined the little Church at Barnstaple, which had just been formed, on the settlement of a daughter of Mr. John Gould in that town. On the suspension of the Rawleigh Woollen Factory, and the consequent removal of a Mr. Davis from the neighbourhood, in 1795 (as will appear from a subsequent chapter), Mr. Gould became the leader of the Class, which office he efficiently filled until age and infirmity obliged him to retire. He died in 1840, having attained the venerable age of ninety years. He resided at Hole for nearly sixty years, and during that period both he and his family gave a hearty welcome to the Ministers of the body. His son, Mr. Thomas Gould, continued in useful union with the Society at Landkey until his death in 1869,—more than one hundred years from the time when his father first joined the Methodist Society at Northmolton.

Mr. John Gould was also a native of Charles, though in no way related to the first-named family. His father was accustomed to attend the services which were held at Northmolton, but there was nothing decided in his Christian character; and his own religious awakening was the result of reading a volume of Mr. Whitefield's sermons, which had been purchased by his father of Mr. Roberts, of Tiverton, to whom reference has already been made in these pages. His wife, whose family name was Hacche, was a member of the Methodist Society at Northmolton; and, on their marriage, they established preaching at their house in Charles, and, afterwards, in the adjoining parish of High Bray.

He was successful in business, and the house at Little Bray was always open to receive the Ministers of the Gospel, whose periodical visits were regarded as Christian festivals. Mr. and Mrs. Gould were also accustomed to attend the services at Northmolton and Tiverton on the occasion of Mr. Wesley's visits to those places. Their decided piety and strong attachment to the cause of Methodism exerted an influence which has been felt through succeeding generations in almost every branch of the family. The following autobiography, collected from Mr. Gould's correspondence, which was always full of religious sentiment, cannot fail to be interesting. It exhibits the high spirituality of his mind and devoutness of his character, as well as his deep interest in the cause of God. He states that in 1756, when twelve years of age, he was sent by his father to a school in Northmolton conducted by Mr. May, a Local-preacher in the Methodist body.* His school terms ranged from Hallowmas to Candlemas, a period of thirteen weeks, and in the five years during which he continued this course of study he states that he became proficient in navigation, land surveying, and, in fact, everything which his master could teach him, with the exception of the more advanced branches of algebra. "A little before I entered the school," he says, "Mr. May suffered great persecution for the sake of religion, but he withstood all opposition, and continued to preach twice a week. I heard him preach sometimes, but did not give up my foolish ways of dancing, wrestling, and card playing, till I was nearly

* It is not improbable that Mr. May's settlement in Northmolton had for its object the sustenance of the infant cause there. He was a good teacher, and excelled especially in land surveying; and the proficiency of those who were brought under his tuition was something remarkable for those early days.

twenty years of age, but I always found that there was no true happiness in these things. My father came to Northmolton sometimes to hear Mr. May, and Mr. Roberts,—a worthy and eloquent preacher who often came from Tiverton, and with whom he formed an acquaintance. Upon a time my father, being at Tiverton, called at Mr. Roberts' shop, and bought a little book containing ten of Mr. Whitefield's sermons,—for which I shall praise God to all eternity. I delighted in reading that book, and I felt much displeased with my father's family when they paid no attention to my reading." He further quaintly remarks: "My father and mother were very passionate people, and they begat a son in their own likeness. I remember seasons in my youth when I was overcome by this evil disposition, but my blessed Saviour bound the strong man armed, and cast him out and took possession of my heart. Since I have enjoyed the pardon and love of God I have found my anger restrained more than anything else. When about twenty years of age, I was led to compare my life and conversation with God's laws, and laboured for some time under a guilty conscience. With these impressions my life became a burden to me. What lay heavier on my mind than anything else was the memory of a dreadful oath I swore, when overcome with anger, about my father's cattle. I continued in great trouble about my soul for some time,—perhaps half a year,—but when I was in my greatest distress, the Lord was pleased to set my soul at liberty, and I knew that my sins were all pardoned. I then saw that there was nothing to justify me before a holy God but the precious blood of Jesus Christ, applied by faith. There was nothing to me so precious as the name of Jesus, and I remember I used to get into some private place—the

barn or hay-loft—to pour out my heart before the Lord. I had three or four kinsfolk who were wrought upon at the same time, and we united together in prayer and holy engagements. I would not now ride over the farm on Sunday mornings as I used to do; at which my father became very much alarmed, regarding my worldly prospects as ruined. He asked his landlord to use his influence to get me into the Excise, but the only reply he received was ‘that I had better be sent to Lady Huntingdon.’ Our parson was also very angry with me.”

On their marriage, in 1774, Mr. and Mrs. Gould at once opened their house for the preaching of the Gospel. Mr. James Shorter was the junior missionary appointed to the North Devon Station at this time, and Mrs. Gould went herself to Southmolton, to conduct him on his first visit to their house. He opened his commission in the parish of Charles, preaching from the words of Moses to Israel—“I AM hath sent me unto you.” This is the first village service in the neighbourhood on record. The intrusion of the Methodists into his ecclesiastical domains greatly offended the clergyman of the parish, who sought to annoy Mr. Gould in every possible way. He was accustomed to demand his “tithe in kind,” as it was then termed, and would, among other things, seize his horses in the midst of harvest on some frivolous pretext. They remained in this farm for twelve years, and, in 1786, removed to Little Bray Farm, in the parish of High Bray, where they also introduced preaching. The services were conducted at first in a dwelling house, and afterwards in a chapel erected in the village of Brayford, part of which is in the parish of Charles, and part in the parish of High Bray. On Mr. Gould’s leaving the parish, the

cause was sustained for many years by Mr. John Dyer, and subsequently by Mr. Nicholas Chamings; and many have there rejoiced, and continue to rejoice in the gospel light. In order to provide a home for the preachers in Barnstaple, Mr. Gould had placed his daughter in business there, and her house in Joy Street, was for many years the resort of these itinerant evangelists, and subsequently of the regularly appointed Ministers of the Wesleyan Connexion. On his retirement from business Mr. Gould himself went to reside at Barnstaple. Here, in company with his friend Mr. William Drewett, he was accustomed to attend the ministry of the Rev. H. W. Gardiner at the Cross-street Meeting-house, in addition to the services in the little chapel in Holland-street, which were originally held only once a fortnight. Mr. Drewett was a member of the Independent Church. He was a man of large sympathies, and gave a hearty welcome to all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. At his house in High-street, and, subsequently, in Castle-street, he was accustomed to appropriate a room for religious services, to which he invited all Christians. In the revivals which took place in the infant Methodist Society, he gave all a hearty greeting to the meetings for prayer. "Come in," he was accustomed to exclaim, "I have a house that will hold a few, and a heart that will hold you all." These venerable Christians held daily meetings for prayer, and they were accustomed to speak of their attendance on these means of grace as "going to court," from a sense that they were entering the presence chamber of God. Truly their "fellowship was with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Mr. Gould resided in Barnstaple for several years, during which time he was identified with, and recognised as a member

of both the Congregational and Methodist Churches. His bright and happy experience cast a radiance on his Christian path which grew brighter with his advancing years. He sustained the habit of constant communion with God, and always felt a sympathy with the members of Christ's Church. To a friend who accosted him as he was resting awhile in the churchyard on a genial spring morning, he responded: "Happy as my heart can hold,—the sun brightly shining without, and the Sun of Righteousness shining in my heart." This heartfelt sense of God's goodness he was accustomed to express in the daily intercourse of life, frequently giving utterance to the joy he experienced in familiar passages of Scripture, and favourite verses of hymns, such as—

Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all.

Which he was accustomed to repeat with peculiar fervour and emphasis.

A letter written to his daughter on the 6th of January, 1823, about a month before his death, exhibits the high tone of his experience in his last illness. After speaking of his bodily weakness and infirmity, he says, "I pass the night in meditation on the fruit of the vine, and the tree of life, and the rivers of living water. I long to breathe my life into my Saviour's arms." Here his strength failed, but in finishing his letter on the following day, he added: "This morning I have been very happy. I can say, with a good man in Scotland on his dying bed, 'If these walls or these curtains could speak they would tell you what sweet communion I have had with my God here!' I bless God that the weaker I get, the happier my soul is. Why me, Lord? I am an unworthy creature. What

am I, Lord, that Thou hast brought me hither? Our Lord said in the days of His flesh that unless we forsake all we have in affection, and follow Him, we cannot be His disciples. I bless the Lord I am ready to give up all for His sake. I say—

Rise up, my soul, fly up and run
Through every heavenly street;
And say there's nought below the sun
Is worthy of thy feet."

His son, Mr. John Gould, of Becket Farm, in the parish of Charles, worthily emulated his father's zeal and piety. He was a warm-hearted and sincere Christian, but he was cut off by death at the comparatively early age of forty years, having only survived his father about three years.

Joseph Gould, the last of the four young men before mentioned, remained in connection with the Methodist Society upwards of fifty years. At one period he farmed as many as seven estates, among which was Mockham Barton, in the parish of High Bray. His brother John* was also a religious man, but there are no traces of his connection with the Methodists of Brayford. On his return home from Collumpton, where he had resided at the close of the last century, he was recognised as a preacher in connection with the Baptists, and through his influence, probably, Joseph was led to embrace the views of that body on baptism. He was publicly baptised on Mockham Down in 1796. The novelty of the scene, (probably the first ceremony

* In a little work just issued, entitled *The Parish Apprentice; or, John Winzer, the North Devon Puritan*, edited by the Rev. Samuel Newnam, the master of John Winzer is misnamed John Gould, though this is rectified in his epitaph. Many of the incidents attributed to him, also refer to John. The latter subsequently laboured as a Home Missionary at Croyde, Torrington, and Newton St. Petrock, where he was buried.

of the kind that had ever taken place in the neighbourhood,) excited much ridicule and opposition, in which the clergyman of the parish took part.*

The change in Mr. Gould's views on the subject of baptism did not interfere with his attachment to the Methodist services, or weaken his sympathy and union with his old associates. He continued to attend the services in Brayford village, gave a cordial welcome at all times to the itinerant missionaries in their periodical visits, and was a recognised member of the Society, till within two years of his death. In 1813, he presented a piece of land for building a Wesleyan chapel and contributed to the funds for its erection. As the children of the congregation were usually baptised in the parish church, there was no collision for many years on the points upon which they differed. On the appointment, however, of the Rev. W. Worth to the superintendency of the Circuit in 1815, that Minister felt he could not conscientiously omit an ordinance so important and interesting, and determined publicly to baptize an infant in the chapel.

As the ground for erecting the chapel was given with the understanding that no infants should be baptized within its walls, the course pursued by Mr. Worth gave great offence to Mr. Gould, and he formally separated himself from the Methodists and established preaching in a neighbouring cottage. This led to the formation of the first Baptist Church in that neighbourhood.

By this secession, the Society in Brayford, which numbered in 1815 thirty-seven members, was reduced at the next return to twenty-four. Among those who left were John Winzer, William Quick, with his two

* Many of the details in the book referred to in a former note, stated to have taken place at John Winzer's baptism, occurred at this period.

sisters, and Edward Widlake, Jun.* The last-named was an exemplary young man, and a zealous Local-preacher in the Methodist body, and afterwards settled as Pastor of a Baptist Church at Brixham. Mr. Widlake's father still remained attached to the old body, and was one of an extensive family who had for three generations been associated with Methodism, and whose descendants have faithfully served, to an important extent, the Church of their fathers.

Mr. Gould was an earnest Christian, as was his wife (Mary Widlake), but his eccentricities and decided views on doctrinal points interfered, in his latter days, with the comfort and harmony of this otherwise interesting Christian community, and divided those whose united efforts might have been more successfully exerted in the surrounding neighbourhood. One of Mr. Gould's favourite theories was that the Divine blessing so pre-eminently rested on those who were immersed, that they were not liable to take cold, however severe the weather. A young preacher having on one occasion opposed this notion, by stating an instance to the contrary which had come under his own notice, in which the person had died as the consequence, Mr. Gould summarily ejected him from his house at midnight to seek accommodation elsewhere. The circumstances attending the interment of this remarkable man were as singular as his life. He was buried in the Churchyard at Charles without any funeral rites, and about two years afterwards his body was exhumed under the following circumstances:—


* Several anachronisms occur also in the *Life of John Winzer*, though the details are generally founded on fact. In referring to Mr. Widlake, for instance, it is stated at page 47, that he was born six weeks after the baptism of Mr. Winzer, and at page 51 that he died in 1829, aged 31. At page 18, on the contrary, we find John Winzer was baptized in his 21st year, in the year 1809.

Among the parish apprentices who were bound to Mr. Gould during his residence at Mockham Barton, was an intelligent youth named John Winzer, who in 1797 removed, with his master, to Brayford village. In 1804, being in his sixteenth year, he joined the Methodist Society, and though he adopted his master's views on baptism was recognized as a member for many years afterwards. At his death, Mr. Gould bequeathed a piece of land for the erection of a Baptist chapel immediately adjoining that formerly built for the Methodists, and about two years after his decease, John Winzer and Mrs. Gould were actively engaged in carrying out the object. When the building was in course of erection, some ill-disposed person displaced Mr. Gould's tombstone, and threw it into the road; this circumstance led to a scheme for doing honour to the remains of his old friend, and it was resolved to transfer the body to a tomb prepared for its reception in the new chapel. He accordingly stipulated with the men engaged in the erection of the building to remove the body to a vault which had been prepared, and on a given night a corps of grave-diggers, furnished with every appliance, proceeded to the churchyard and excavated the grave, removing the body beyond the churchyard boundaries; and having replaced the soil and turf so as to avoid suspicion, they were about to remove the remains of Mr. Gould to their final resting place. At this juncture, however, a farmer's lad who was returning home stumbled over the coffin which lay in the footpath, and in his alarm hastened to the village to gain assistance; but just as the affrighted villagers reached the gates of the churchyard, the nocturnal depredators had made their exit by a side path, and the mysterious circumstance afterwards formed the foundation of many a

Christmas ghost story. The party reached the chapel without further molestation, and the interment was completed.

These circumstances also led to the establishment of Churches in the villages of Charles, Bratton Fleming, Croyde, and Combmartin, and the Baptist cause advanced on the pathway which had now been trodden by the Methodist itinerants for more than sixty years. In the last-named village, especially, Mr. Winzer was the means of establishing an efficient Baptist interest with a resident pastor, the converts in connexion with which gratefully acknowledge the services he so seasonably rendered; and it must be acknowledged that the Home-Missionary arrangements of that body have proved better adapted to some of these distant and scattered populations than the plan of the Wesleyan body of working from given centres. As a result of this inroad by death and removal to another locality of the two Leaders, Mr. Gould and Mr. George Beer, the cause sank to a very low ebb for many years.

At a more recent date, in 1835, under the influence of the present excellent Leader and his family, the Society rose to more than its former strength; and the two interests flourish side by side with manifest advantage to the parish and neighbourhood.



CHAPTER IV.



EARLY MISSIONARY LABOURS.

“And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.”—NUMBERS xi. 27—29.

IN 1784, four Ministers were appointed to North Devon, viz., John Mason, William Ashman, R. Epringham, and C. Kyte; and it is probable that at this time the first resident preacher was stationed at Bideford, though no record of any specific appointment appears in the Minutes of Conference until 1788. The following were the appointments to Tiverton and Bideford between that year and 1792:—

1788. *Tiverton*:—William Ashman, J. M^cKersey.
Bideford:—Richard Drew, John Sandoe.
1789. *Tiverton*:—Richard Drew, J. Poole.
Bideford:—Samuel Bardsley.
1790. *Tiverton*:—R. Drew, Theophilus Lessey.
Bideford:—S. Bardsley, John Wride.
1791. *Tiverton*:—Theo. Lessey, George Wadsworth.
Bideford:—R. Epringham.*

In 1792, the whole district was included in one Circuit, with Collumpton at its head.

* See Watkins' History of Bideford, published 1792.

These devoted missionaries were ever "in labours more abundant," and the varied incidents which marked their toilsome journeys over this extensive area are full of interest, illustrating, as they do, their self-denying zeal, as well as the condition of the people whose spiritual welfare they were labouring to promote.*

John Mason, who was appointed to North Devon in 1784, was a man of cultivated mind, and extensively acquainted with every branch of useful knowledge. He was well read in history, both sacred and profane. With anatomy and medicine he had an intimate acquaintance, and his knowledge of Natural History was very comprehensive. Few persons in the British Empire had so thoroughly mastered the science of Botany, and his collections of specimens would have done credit to the first museums in Europe, particularly those of the various species of English plants, which were all gathered, preserved, classified, and described by himself. But this was his least praise: he laid all his attainments in natural science under contribution to his theological studies, and his sermons were fruitful in blessing to the people to whom he ministered. He retired from the work of the ministry in 1797, and settled at West Meon, near Portsmouth, after having travelled thirty-three years. He died suddenly in 1810, whilst worshipping in St. Meon Church, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

* Of 218 preachers whom Mr. Myles, in his Chronological List, calls the first race of Methodist preachers, no less than 113 desisted from travelling. The labours and privations to which the preachers were exposed were too much for the endurance of ordinary men. Of the 105 who continued in the work till death, a majority fell prematurely—human nature being overwhelmed with the toil. Great numbers took charge of Dissenting congregations, and some went into the Established Church.

There are several incidents in connection with the appointment of Messrs. Drew and Sandoe to Bideford in 1788, on record. The first relates to the introduction of Methodism into Torrington. In 1833, an elderly gentleman was observed standing opposite the neat and unpretending Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in that town, attentively pondering on the scene before him. It transpired that his name was Drew, and that he had come from Wales, where he was then residing, on a tour through the North of Devon. "Ah," he said to a bystander, with great feeling, "I was among the first Methodist Ministers who visited Torrington;" and he then proceeded to give a history of his labours there some forty-five years before.

Torrington, and the district around it was at that time almost inaccessible to preachers of the Gospel. The iniquitous restrictions of the Conventicle Act were perpetuated in the leases of the estates in the neighbourhood, and no tenant dared to hold a religious meeting in his house since it would endanger the tenure of his farm. Under these depressing influences even the old Nonconformist cause, established on the ejection of the venerated John Howe from the Established Church, almost died out.

At an early period preaching had been introduced into Merton, a village six miles from Torrington; where the long room adjoining the churchyard (which was afterwards used as a poor house), was placed at the disposal of the preachers by the clergyman of the parish. Both the rector, and Mr. Cann, the steward of Lord Clinton, cherished a most friendly feeling towards the Methodists. The latter was a Cornishman, and had a previous acquaintance with Mr. Sandoe, Mr. Drew's colleague, who was also from that county. The Hymn-

books and various appliances used in Divine worship at this date, remained in the room so late as the year 1818, and the above facts were then fresh in the recollection of some of the older inhabitants of the village.

Mr. Drew, no doubt, paid his first visit to Torrington as he was returning from his appointment at Merton. It seems that, on this occasion, he stopped at the hamlet of Taddipport, just at the foot of the steep street which forms one of the approaches to the town, and obtained permission to preach in the court-yard attached to one of the cottages ; but the people here evinced a different spirit to that displayed at Merton. He had scarcely begun to speak when he was interrupted by the appearance of a magistrate (Mr. Henry Stevens, of Cross House), who directed the parish clerk to pull the preacher down from the chair on which he was standing. The man was unwilling to obey this order and expostulated with the magistrate, " Let him alone, Sir, let him preach it out ; " upon which Mr. Stevens said he would quiet him himself, and he at once proceeded to pull the preacher from the chair. This excited the people and subjected Mr. Drew to considerable ill-treatment at their hands. They refused to allow him to leave the premises by the front way, and forced him through an orchard at the back, in which was an old quarry pit full of brambles and thorns. Into this pit the rabble determined to throw the preacher, the Squire all the while urging them on. When they came to the edge of the quarry the crowd still pressed forward, and Mr. Drew, finding that he must inevitably be forced over the edge, seized the Squire, who was standing close by, by his skirt, and both were precipitated into the depths below. Though seriously scratched and bruised, they scrambled out as best they could into a road leading to

the bridge over the river Torridge. When they arrived there, the rabble resolved to throw the preacher into the river, but Mr. Drew (who was the son of a magistrate in Wales), by some means ascertained that his persecutor was in the commission of the peace, and at once appealed to him for protection from the violence of the people, at the same time giving him to understand that it was his duty to do so. The Squire, now feeling his position, ordered the rabble to desist, and suffered the preacher to go on his way. On his crossing the bridge, an aged woman said to him, "We shall have no more Methodist preaching now, I suppose;" when he asked if she would like to have more. Her reply being in the affirmative, he announced his determination to preach again. He accordingly proceeded to the Common on the North side of Mill-street, where he addressed the assembled congregation in the words of Paul to the Galatian Churches,—“Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” His exhausted strength would not allow him to preach long, and he proceeded to the town and rested for the night at the Globe Hotel. A representation of the case having been made to Mr. Wesley, he wrote to Mr. Stevens, expostulating with him on his conduct. This exasperated him still more, and he threatened to drive the Methodists out of the county. Mr. Wesley then cited him before the Court of King’s Bench. The process, which was twice served upon him, having been treated with contempt, two officers from the Court came down to Torrington, and took him in charge. These proceedings so mortified him that he quitted the neighbourhood, and his house remained unoccupied for thirty years. By this determined action, for some time, the tide of intolerance was stemmed, and those great principles of

civil and religious liberty sustained that led to the development of the national freedom which it is now the happy lot of every Englishman to enjoy.

At Barnstaple the opposition to the new sect was equally determined. On one occasion, when Mr. Sandoe was preaching in the Square, the mayor for the time being sent two constables to order him to desist, and to disperse the congregation. In consequence of this interruption the preacher adjourned to the Tawstock side of the river, beyond the jurisdiction of the local authorities, whither he was followed by his auditory, and there finished his discourse. It is a noteworthy and well-authenticated fact that before the end of the year in which Mr. Sandoe had been silenced and driven from the town, the mayor died suddenly, and both the constables committed suicide.

Messrs. Drew and Sandoe were succeeded in the following year by Mr. Bardsley, the amiability and mildness of whose temperament contrasted strikingly with the bold and determined character of his predecessors. Mr. Bardsley was a sincere and earnest preacher of the gospel, and his memory was long cherished by those who came under his pastoral influence in the North of Devon. The estimation in which he was held by Mr. Wesley may be gathered from the fact that he was appointed one of the Legal Hundred in the Deed of Declaration which settled the constitution and powers of the Conference. He was an eminently holy and useful man, and in stationing him at Bideford Mr. Wesley evinced his special interest in that place. He is particularly referred to in Dunn's *Memoirs of Mr. Tatham, of Nottingham*. Mr. Tatham, in giving an account of a religious awakening in that town, thus speaks of him:—"I then exhorted

everyone who felt a hungering and thirsting after God to engage in prayer. Mr. Bardsley prayed first, and as he concluded, the Spirit of the Most High came upon me in such a manner as it is impossible to express. Such a manifestation of the Divine presence we had never before experienced. On rising from our knees every countenance beamed with joy, and every tongue broke forth into praise." The Bideford Circuit was probably arranged to extend as far as Northmolton, for when Mr. Bardsley's duties called him on the Barnstaple side of the district, he used to preach at that place and at Brayford in the former part of the day, arriving at the residence of Mr. Joshua Gould, at Landkey, in time to refresh himself, and accompany the family to an evening service at Barnstaple. On one of these occasions an incident occurred which was often referred to by the family in after years. As the time approached for starting for Barnstaple, Mr. Bardsley expressed a wish that all the family might go to the service that night, and offered to take two of the children on his own horse, one before and one behind him. In those days, wheeled carriages were unknown in the neighbourhood, the steep hills being traversed by horses furnished with pack saddles and other ingenious contrivances. Thus mounted, the whole family proceeded to "the House of God in company." On returning home, however, the night being very dark, Mr. Bardsley's horse, in descending Maidenford Hill, stumbled and threw all three into the mud. He calmly bore the discomfiture, but his heart was so deeply affected with a sense of God's goodness in preserving him and his little charge from serious injury, that at family prayer that night he vented his feelings in rapturous expressions of praise and love. Another

interesting incident is also recorded by the family. On one occasion when poor "Jack" committed one of his usual blunders, and threw off his indulgent rider, the meekness shown by the good man so affected a bystander as to lead to his conversion to God. On raising himself from the ground, he exclaimed, "O poor thing, thee would'st not have done it if thee could'st have helped it." The closing scene of Mr. Bardsley's life was strikingly characteristic. He died, at a ripe old age, whilst on his way from the Leeds Conference of 1818 to Manchester, to which place he was appointed. He was accompanied on his journey by his friend Mr. Wrigley, and had arrived as far as Delph, where he resolved to rest for the night. Having taken tea, he expressed a wish to retire to rest, and his friend went with him upstairs; before they had reached the bedroom, however, Mr. Bardsley appeared tired, and sat down; and, having sweetly said, "My dear, I must die," instantly expired. He had long been the oldest preacher in the Connexion, and was engaged in the ministerial work to the last. With the genuine simplicity of a child was combined great maturity of Christian character: transparently sincere, profoundly zealous for the cause of God, and scrupulously attentive to every part of Christian discipline, he was ever welcomed as an acceptable and useful Minister of the New Covenant, and his sudden departure was lamented by all who knew him.

At the Conference of 1790 Mr. Drew received as his colleague in the Tiverton Circuit Mr. Theophilus Lessey, who succeeded, in 1791, to the superintendency of what was from that time styled the Collumpton Circuit, to which three ministers were appointed. Mr. Lessey resided in Collumpton, and his two colleagues were

located at Tiverton and Bideford. He entered the Methodist ministry in 1786, and, after labouring in Penzance and St. Austell, he was appointed by Mr. Wesley to North Devon. Having a wife and family, his expenses during these years were greatly in excess of his ministerial stipend, and he nobly sank the whole of his private property in providing for the necessities of himself and family. As this was the first time he had been appointed to the office of Superintendent, it occasioned him considerable solicitude. The Circuit, his biographer informs us, extended from Bridport in Dorsetshire to Torbay in Devonshire, and from Wellington in Somerset to Camelford in Cornwall. This immense distance to be travelled rendered it impossible for him to be home more than four nights in six weeks, and exposed him to considerable privation.* During the first year he was in the Circuit his mother lay dangerously ill for many months, and his long-continued separation from her greatly distressed him. He often set out for the extreme parts of the Circuit with an aching heart, in trembling apprehension that a messenger might bring him the intelligence of her death. To increase his trouble, in the latter part of November, Mr. Empringham, one of his colleagues, who resided at Bideford,† —“a faithful labourer in the

* It required the utmost tact and encouragement of Wesley to sustain the courage and enterprise of his helpers, amid their many privations and difficulties. In a reply to one of the preachers who wrote in a desponding tone on account of the hardness of the work, and the shortness of the supplies, he accompanied an earnest exhortation to perseverance, with the promise of immediate help, to procure which he remarked, “I will beg, borrow,—anything but steal.” To a junior preacher who, on another occasion, made a complaint of his bad lodgings, stating that when he slept the “spiders fell into his mouth,” Mr. Wesley is said to have sent the following facetious and laconic reply:—“Dear Brother, When you sleep again, I would advise you to keep your mouth shut.”

† Several members of the Gould family visited him, during his affliction, at his obscure lodgings in Bideford, and administered to his wants. The

vineyard of the Lord"—was obliged to leave the Circuit in consequence of his inability to perform his work, and died about two months afterwards. His other colleague, at Tiverton, was also compelled by illness to suspend his labours, so that the whole care of the Circuit now devolved upon him; yet his mind was divinely supported, and, to use his own words, "The cause of God was so dear to his heart that his duty to his heavenly Master weighed more powerfully with him than the strongest earthly tie, or the greatest earthly comfort." Acting under the impulse of this high and holy motive, every consideration of personal ease was lost sight of in the diligent and conscientious performance of his sacred work, and at the close of the year he had the happiness to see that neither the societies nor congregations had at all diminished, but that, on the contrary, the spirit of piety had deepened and extended. He remained another year in this Circuit, during which time he had the satisfaction of seeing the work of God in great prosperity, numbers being added to the Churches. Mr. Lessey travelled after this in many of the most important Circuits in the Connexion; and in Macclesfield, especially, his labours were eminently blessed.

During the second year of Mr. Lessey's ministry in North Devon Mr. Wesley died. The Methodist Church at that time comprised 134,599 members:—76,968 in Great Britain, and 57,631 in the United States,—to which number North Devon contributed 519; and in the two hemispheres there were 233 Circuits, and 540 travelling preachers. As Dr. Abel

discomfort he endured is set forth in the Apostle's description of himself under similar circumstances:—"For whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung."

Stevens well remarks in his "History of Methodism," seldom in history has an individual life been more complete in its results than was that of Wesley. No prelate in the land, no Englishman whatever, save the sovereign himself, swayed a wider and more profound popular power. No man travelled more extensively among the people, or oftener visited them in their towns and villages. His power could now, in any necessity, reach almost any part of the three kingdoms by the systematic apparatus of Methodism. His directions given to his "assistants," could be conveyed by them to his three hundred preachers, who were continually hastening like couriers over their long Circuits; by these they could be transmitted to 1,200 local-preachers, who, with the itinerant Ministers, brought them under the notice of 4,000 Stewards and Class-Leaders; and these, by means of the several Societies, made them directly known to more than 70,000 members. Such a power created by himself without prestige, but now wielded with a prestige which secured grateful and almost implicit obedience from his people, would have been perilous in the hands of a weak and selfish man, but as exerted by him was productive of the grandest spiritual results.

On the death of the Founder of Methodism the attention of the Conference was directed to those measures of consolidation and legislation which were necessary to meet the altered circumstances of the Connexion. As a result, probably, of this, we find that in 1792, the third year of Mr. Lessey's ministry in North Devon, Bideford was abandoned as the head of a Circuit, and the whole of the district included in what was styled the Collumpton Circuit, to which Mr. John M'Geary was appointed one of the Ministers.

Collumpton is a small town about twelve miles from Exeter and five miles from Tiverton. It was frequently visited, when on his way to Cornwall, by Mr. Wesley, who used to go thence to North Tawton and Launceston. It contained a manufacturing population of about 3,000 or 4,000, and the working classes being free from religious restrictions, they heartily embraced the doctrines of Methodism. A larger Society was gathered here than in any other town in Devonshire, excepting Plymouth, and the contributions of the members in support of the cause were liberal in the extreme. Among the members connected with the Church here in earlier years, was a man in humble circumstances, named James Lackington, whose history is a most remarkable one. He joined the Society in 1770, and appeared to be very sincere in the profession of Christianity which he made. He was by trade a shoemaker, and, at the time of his joining the Methodist body, could neither read nor write, but, being possessed of good natural ability, he soon made himself proficient in these acquirements. He was skilful in his business, and subsequently was employed in several towns in East Devon and Somerset; but finding that he could but barely earn a livelihood he resolved on travel, and leaving his wife, who was also a Methodist, at South Petherton, he arrived in London, in 1773, with only half-a-crown in his pocket.

With the assistance of one of Mr. Wesley's followers, and a loan of £5 from one of the benevolent funds of the Connexion, established to assist poor tradesmen, he was enabled to take a small shop and parlour in Featherstone-street, St. Luke's, his friend remarking to him, as he started him in business, "When you are Lord Mayor, don't forget to use all your

interest to get me made an alderman!" With a little stock of books, consisting, among others, of "Fletcher's Checks to Antinomianism," Watts' "Improvement of the Mind," "Wesley's Journal," and Young's "Night Thoughts," and some odd scraps of leather, he opened his shop, Midsummer, 1774.

He soon found the sale of second-hand books so profitable that he was induced to abandon his former trade, and remove to larger premises in Chiswell-street. Acting on the principle of "small profits and quick returns," he soon gained a considerable accession to his business, and the number of his customers rapidly increased, until his sales amounted to 100,000 volumes in a year. He carefully catalogued all the books himself, and thereby acquired a considerable acquaintance with literature. The business eventually became the largest in London, and the stock of books acquired such immense proportions that it had again to be removed to more extensive premises, which were styled "The Temple of the Muses." In the zenith of his prosperity Mr. Lackington visited the scenes of his earlier years, and was received with due honour by his old acquaintances. He ultimately retired possessed of considerable wealth.

Unhappily, however, there is a dark side to the picture. In his prosperity Mr. Lackington embraced infidel views, and in an autobiography which he published he cast the greatest contempt on his former convictions and associates. The work contained a number of fictitious letters, which were full of the basest slanders against Mr. Wesley and his followers.

The sequel of this eccentric man's history is most remarkable. In 1803 he renounced his infidel principles, acknowledged that he had been "duped and

cheated out of his Christianity" by reading atheistic works and associating with evil companions, and, with strong professions of repentance, again embraced the faith from which he had departed some thirty years before. He now devoted his leisure to the promotion of religious and philanthropic objects, and, as if to make amends for his recreant career, he erected, at a cost of £3,000, the Temple Chapel at Taunton* which has recently undergone reconstruction. He subsequently built another Wesleyan chapel at Budleigh Salterton, at a cost of £2,000, which he presented to the Connexion. He died in the latter town in 1815.

Among the Ministers who laboured in the West of England at this period, in the latter part of the last century, and whose memories are still held in veneration and respect, are Thomas Trethewey, in 1794, whose son and grandson have successively laboured in the Barnstaple Circuit; John Cricket, who travelled in the Taunton Circuit in the same year,—an honest and successful evangelist, whose sayings are handed down to the present time as the utterances of one who literally "knew nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified;" Jacob Stanley, at Launceston, in 1799,—an acute reasoner, whose facetious and pungent style gave great charm to his preaching and to the racy publications touching on the religious questions of the day, which emanated from his pen; John Jordan, at Collumpton, in 1802,—a man of cultivated mind and varied talents, whose ministry on his second appointment to the Barnstaple Circuit is still remembered by many. A more extended notice of some of these

* In the front of the chapel the following inscription was placed:—"This Temple is erected as a monument of God's mercy in converting an Infidel: Reader, consider the whole of thine existence."

eminently pious and devoted men will be given in the course of our History.

Mr. Trethewey succeeded Mr. Lessey in the Collumpton Circuit in 1794. He was a native of St. Stephen's, Branwell, in the east of Cornwall. Before his union with the Methodists he was a zealous adherent of the Established Church, and such was the opinion entertained of him that when he consented to attend the cottage services in the village, some of his neighbours, influenced rather by example than reasoning, were heard to affirm that the "new sect everywhere spoken against" must be right, or otherwise he would not have joined it. His early attachment to the Church of England was indeed strong, and continued unabated to the end of his life; but when once made a partaker of the blessings of experimental religion he found a congenial home in communion with the Methodist Society. This occurred during a gracious revival of religion in his native village, in 1783. Becoming deeply affected at the ignorance and depravity which prevailed on every side, he soon began to hold meetings for prayer in the surrounding villages, and afterwards to preach the gospel to the people, devoting a considerable portion of his time to the work, until, in the year 1790, he was called to enter on the more important duties of the Methodist ministry. He travelled for eight years, when he was obliged to retire from active work in consequence of great bodily infirmity; but he continued to preach and visit the sick, as the state of his health would permit, until 1812, in which year he died, at the age of fifty-four.

Mr. Trethewey's colleague in the Collumpton Circuit was Mr. John Leech, who was now an old labourer in the vineyard, having entered the ministry in 1773,

after many years' previous service as a Local-preacher. To a zeal which no difficulties could extinguish, he added a simplicity of manner and rectitude of conduct which would have shed a lustre on the Christian church in its purest days. After having travelled in Cornwall and other parts of England for eleven years, in 1784, at the call of Mr. Wesley, he went to Ireland, where he remained three years. In returning to his native shores the vessel in which he embarked in company with Mr. Wesley, Dr. Coke, and other preachers, was wrecked, and the whole narrowly escaped with their lives. The manly and Christian demeanour of the Ministers of God under these trying circumstances called from the captain of the vessel, who had just lost his all, an encomium which deserves to be placed on record. "I have," said he, "been captain of a vessel for twenty years, and I have often crossed the Channel with brutes, but these" (alluding to the preachers), "are men!" Mr. Leech continued in the work until 1803, and then returned to his home near Rochdale, where he died, in the full assurance of hope, in 1810. His ministry was attended with great success, and during his residence in North Devon he established several new stations in that already extensive Circuit, where Societies were formed.

Mr. Cricket, to whom reference has also been made, though a man of great excellence, was exceedingly simple-hearted and eccentric. His missionary labours were principally directed to the northern side of Exmoor, in which district many stories illustrative of his peculiarities are still preserved. The following incidents occurred out of our prescribed district, but no apology will be needed for giving them a place in these pages. On his appointment to labour in what is now the

Dunster Circuit, he took up his temporary residence at the house of a friend residing at what had been a wayside inn, known by the sign of the Dragon. Mr. C. appears to have reached his destination some twenty-four hours after his colleague, whom he met in the sitting-room prior to breakfast. After a fraternal salutation, he made inquiries respecting the inhabitants of the village, and, pointing to a cottage in the distance, asked, "Who lives there?" His colleague reminded him that he also was a stranger, and knew nothing of the neighbourhood. To which Mr. C. rejoined, "What! have you been here twenty-four hours and have not called to ask them the state of their souls?" He thereupon left the house, visited and talked with the cottagers before he partook of breakfast.

He was once preaching in the old chapel at Williton. His subject was the abounding love of God, from which he took occasion to digress for a moment to draw some practical inferences. The people had been lacking in Christian liberality, and had not supported the Gospel in a manner equal to their means; Mr. C. therefore, reminded them of their duty by inquiring, "Don't you think, friends, it would be an excellent thing if, at the close of his labours on Sunday evening, God were to take the preacher up to heaven, and keep him till the following Sunday morning, when He could let him down to preach? He wouldn't cost anything to maintain him then, would he?" This quaint rebuke had the desired effect.

About the year 1790, a young man named Crosse came to reside at Barnstaple, having been engaged as clerk at the Rawleigh Woollen Factory in that town. He was a member of the Methodist Society and had been a local preacher at Bristol; and as the Ministers only visited

Barnstaple once a fortnight, on a week day evening, his services were most valuable in fostering the infant cause here. He became the leader of the little class, then numbering about six persons, and occasionally preached to the small congregation which at that time met in a room in Boutport-street. Through his instrumentality the cause greatly advanced, and a more commodious place in which to conduct the public services was found to be necessary. A fund was soon raised by subscription, and a small chapel, which accommodated about 100 persons, was erected in Holland-street on a site at the rear of the house now occupied by Mr. Harris, tailor. Here the Society grew and multiplied, but the prosperity which attended the little Church was of short duration: the woollen trade having declined, in consequence of the war which succeeded the French Revolution, the Factory at Rawleigh, which had employed 1,000 persons, was abandoned, and in 1795, Mr. Crosse removed from the town. At this juncture, Mr. Joshua Gould who then resided at Hole, about three miles from Barnstaple, became the Leader of the little class, and he continued to hold that office until age and infirmity incapacitated him for the work. Previously to this, Mr. John Gould had settled his daughter (afterwards Mrs. Avery) in business in Barnstaple, a house was provided for the Methodist preachers, and thus the influence of the parent churches at Northmolton and Brayford was being felt in the extension of the evangelizing influences of Methodism to that town.

Mr. and Mrs. Avery fulfilled the duty which had been entrusted to them with great fidelity and for nearly fifty years exercised that hospitality which the itinerant character of the Methodist ministry and the fraternal

feeling which pervades the body necessarily calls forth.*

In the year 1791 the various Circuits in the Connexion were first divided into districts ; an arrangement rendered necessary by the loss of the episcopal supervision exercised by Mr. Wesley, in his periodical visits to every part of the kingdom ; and, in 1794, Launceston having been made a Circuit, was included in the Plymouth District, with North Devon. In 1797, the new regulations for the government of the Connexion were completed, though, as may be supposed, the changes which were made had called forth much diversity of opinion and consequent secessions from the body. In this year, Dr. Coke was President, and Mr. Bradburn, Secretary of the Conference ; and the following were the appointments in the

SEVENTH DISTRICT.—PLYMOUTH DOCK.

Plymouth Dock (Devonport).—Theophilus Lessey, John Ashell.

Collumpton.—James Evans, Edward Millward, Hans Shrouder.

Launceston.—John Smith, Richard Treffry, and Joseph Bowes.

Theophilus Lessey, *Chairman of the District.*


In the year 1798, the 58th Regiment of foot was stationed at Barnstaple, and among the non-commissioned officers was Sergeant Davis, a man of

* Referring to Mr. Avery in an account of the late Opening Services of the new Wesleyan Chapel in Barnstaple, the *Exeter Western Times* remarked :—" Nor need it be forgotten that a local ministry of some power in time supplemented the regulars. The late Mr. John Avery, who in 1824 published the first Liberal newspaper in the locality—*The North Devon Journal*—is a name that should be remembered on this occasion with honour."

excellent character, and an accredited local preacher in the Methodist Connexion, who was permitted by his commanding-officer to exercise his preaching talents, and otherwise serve the cause of religion, in the intervals of military duty. Christian soldiers in the army were in those days most valuable coadjutors in the work of evangelisation. Not unfrequently officers gladly welcomed the Methodist preachers to their camps and barracks, and there are many interesting records of conversions in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Those who were thus brought under Divine influence became, in their turn, bold and unflinching champions of the Truth, and frequently were the means of introducing the Gospel into the different towns in which they were quartered. While at Barnstaple, Sergeant Davis zealously devoted himself to the service of the Methodist Society, preaching not only on Sabbath-days, but also on week nights. The novelty of a person in soldier's uniform occupying the pulpit attracted a numerous auditory, and many were induced to unite themselves to the Church. On his removal from the town, after a few weeks, the Society was again deprived of a resident pastor. The care of the little flock now devolved on Mr. Joshua Gould, of Hole, who, as we have already stated, sustained the office of leader for many years.

In 1798, George Gellard, a young man of Northmolton, entered on the work of the ministry, and continued to labour until 1821. He was eminent for his earnest piety, and was a most acceptable and useful preacher. Though in early life he had few educational advantages, in later years he diligently applied himself to the culture of his mind, and filled with credit his various appointments. On his becoming a supernu-

merary in 1821, he took up his residence at Exeter, and afterwards removed to Budleigh Salterton, where his wife's former husband, Mr. Lackington, had built a chapel, as already stated. He was a man of amiable disposition and a faithful friend. Having been truly converted to God, he had clear views of the atoning work, and he lived in constant communion with God. He died in peace, July 6th, 1833.



CHAPTER V.



CLOVELLY, HARTLAND, AND BUCKLAND BREWER.

* * * * *

"Not half its glory can be told!
The sylvan pomp and majesty
Which there in harmony have met;
The bay which, in the neighbouring sea,
A sapphire seems in emerald set;
Enslave the vision and the thought,
As charm on charm is quick reveal'd,
Till pleasure is to rapture wrought,
And language is in silence sealed."—CAPERN.

WE are now brought to the close of the eighteenth century. A generation had passed away since the pioneers of Methodism first visited the North of Devon, but in comparison with other fields of labour the results of their work had been very small. A line of preaching stations had been established extending from Collumpton to Launceston, but in 1802, it was reported that there were only 504 members in the whole Circuit, and of this number Barnstaple and Bideford contributed but few. At this juncture Mr. Jordan accompanied Dr. Coke on a tour through the north of Devon.

The Doctor was a native of Brecon, in Wales. Having resolved to enter the Church, he became, at

seventeen years of age, gentleman commoner at Jesus College, Oxford, and took his LL.D. degree. He left the University under the influence of the fashionable infidelity which then prevailed in cultivated circles, and though the writings of Sherlock had relieved his doubts he pursued his ministerial labours with deep religious anxiety. His first charge was the curacy of South Petherton, in Somerset, and here he preached with so much earnestness that his church became crowded. Whilst on a visit to a family in Devonshire, however, he was brought into contact with an untutored but intelligent Methodist, a Class-Leader of a Society in the neighbourhood. The "educated divine received from this lay teacher instruction on the profoundest of subjects,"* and subsequently, while preaching, he received the peace of God which the rustic Class-Leader had described to him. This led to a marked change in his public ministrations, which called forth the opposition of the Bishop of the Diocese, and the Rector of the parish, and resulted in his leaving the Church. He was ejected from the parish amid the ringing of the church bells, and "thus was given to the world a man who was destined to rank second only to Wesley in the successful spread of Arminian Methodism, and who was to be the first Protestant Bishop in the New World."* In the performance of his duties he crossed the Atlantic eighteen times, at his own expense, besides which he periodically visited Ireland, and was untiring in his travels throughout Great Britain to solicit subscriptions for his missionary enterprises at home and in the West Indian Islands. It was partly with this object, and partly, perhaps, with a view to take a survey of the district, that he paid a visit to North Devon at this period. The

* Dr. Abel Stevens' History.

result of that visit was seen in the more vigorous prosecution of the missionary work which followed.

Under Dr. Coke's auspices the Wesleyan Home-Missionary operations were greatly extended, and, in 1806, at his request, Mr. Haime accepted an appointment to the Bideford Circuit. The sphere of his labour included Barnstaple, Southmolton, Northmolton, Chulmleigh, Bideford, Torrington, Hartland, and the whole district lying within this extensive radius.

Charles Haime was a shepherd on Salisbury Plain, and, previously to his entering the ministry, assisted his father in the management of his farm. His commanding stature, muscular frame, and powerful voice, secured for him respectful attention, and qualified him for the laborious duties of this unpromising station. He was a nephew of the celebrated John Haime, the converted soldier, who was as unflinching in his zeal for the Truth as he was brave and heroic in the field. The latter became a successful evangelist among his fellow soldiers, and after his discharge from the army he won numerous trophies for the Redeemer's Kingdom: he was one of Mr. Wesley's most successful lay helpers, and was well known in Cornwall and elsewhere as a "Son of Thunder." Charles Haime partook of much of his uncle's intrepidity and earnest devotedness to the cause of Christ.

Referring to the century which had just now passed away, it is worthy of notice that next to the bond of fellowship which the United Society, with its classes, established, the great feature of the ecclesiastical system of Methodism was its itinerant lay ministry. Wesley early saw what a mighty agency this would become in the Christian world, and he trained with the utmost diligence the noble band of self-denying men, who have been well styled "the cavalry of Protestant Christendom,"

not only in a moral but also in a literal sense, for by no other body of Christians has the horse been put in such general requisition for the spread of the Gospel as by the Methodist travelling ministry.*

As we have intimated, Mr. Haime was well adapted for the work assigned him in North Devon. Well mounted, he traversed this hilly and difficult country when turnpike roads and wheeled vehicles were alike unknown. His biographer informs us that for the first twelve months he never slept for two successive nights in the same bed. The saddle-bags which hung on either side of the rider, contained his wardrobe and library, and thus equipped, he set out on his missionary tour, oft-times having no settled destination, but resolved that wherever he found a group of houses there to preach "Jesus, Who delivers from the wrath to come." He thus carried the Gospel into many a town and village hitherto unvisited, and though he met with much opposition he was cheered with great success.

The rural parts of his extensive Circuit much needed such an evangelical agency, and not less so the towns† on which the first wave of the great Methodist revival was now beginning to break. Among the clergy of the district one might occasionally be found who was both a scholar and a gentleman, but, as a rule, it was not convenient for the patrons of the livings to have a minister of too pious a mould, and very frequently the benefices were reserved for the second son of the 'Squire, or a near relative, irrespective of his qualifications for the sacred office, intellectually or morally—(it was not expected that the clergyman should be a strictly

* Dr. Stevens's History.

† At the commencement of the present century bull-baiting and cock-fighting were the favorite amusements of the people.

religious man.) As a consequence, in many parishes the people were grossly immoral ; many of the farmers and their children, and three-fourths of the labouring classes, were unable to read ; and the obnoxious collection of tithes rendered the clergy so unpopular that those who now and then went to the parish church were not likely to benefit by the ministrations of those whom they had ceased to respect. Most of the poorer classes lived in total neglect of public worship and spent their Sabbaths at the ale-house or engaged in sports which fostered the greatest vice and profanity. There being, as a rule, only one service during the day, those who went to church generally spent the remainder of the Sabbath in inspecting their neighbours' cattle and transacting business. The churchyard was a general meeting-place for commercial transactions both before and after the service, auctions were announced from the tombstones, hunting appointments were arranged, and on "Revel Sundays" the barbarous wrestling matches which were to take place in the ensuing week were publicly proclaimed, and the prizes exhibited.

In the course of his evangelical labours no effort of Mr. Haime was more successful than the introduction of the gospel into Clovelly.

The road by which the tourist approaches this little fishing village intersects the famous pleasure grounds of Clovelly Court. Diverging from the turnpike, the Hobby Road winds through woods of exquisite loveliness, which alternate with thickly shrubbed dells, made musical by the gentle ripple of a thousand rills hurrying onward to the sea. Dotted about in the Bay may be seen the white sails of a few pleasure boats, or, still more picturesque, the "red-winged trawlers" of the fishermen. The sullen-looking promontory to the west is Harty

Point, haunted by all the strong winds and waves of the blackest winter's night ; the silver bar of light in front is the granite peak of Lundy Island, the early Herculeia ;* and beyond are the snugly-built merchantmen bound up and down the Channel. Amid the luxuriant vegetation on either side of the pathway bloom the blue scabia and yellow golden rod, whilst ferns of almost every species grow in rich profusion ; the gentle undulations of the soil making pleasant alternations of softly-rising slopes and valleys covered with virgin grass, or golden with corn. The road follows the line of an oak-mantled cliff, till, nearing the village, it sweeps round the head of a deep ravine. From its woody summit down to the pebble beach at its base, a perfectly unique cataract of cottages descends in an unbroken straight line. So sheer is the fall that the eaves of every house are almost on a level with the foundation of that above. The street itself is paved with well-worn boulders arranged in series of irregular stairs, descending to the harbour, which is protected from the sea by a massive pier encircling it, and skirted on the landward side by a number of antique-looking houses whose balconies overhang the strand. Within the pier, (which was built in the last century by the benevolence of George Cary, Esq., for the protection of the exposed cove,) the fishing boats of the villagers securely nestle ; and from its outer extremity a complete view of the romantic spot is obtained. At an angle of fifty degrees rises a line of white houses, diverging at intervals in terraces over the shelving rocks,—homely in structure, but clean and cheerful in appearance ; at once the strangest, loveliest, and most picturesque nooks the eye of man ever lighted upon.†

* *Six Old Chronicles*, p. 441. *Littleton's and Cowell's Dictionaries*.

† See Descriptions of Clovelly, in the works of Kingsley, Capern, J. A. Langford, and G. Tugwell.

Our missionary would approach the village on the landward side. To descend its precipitous street with a horse would be impossible, but up the graduated pathway a tolerably safe footing could be secured. By a circuitous route Mr. Haime reached the foot of the village, and passing through a low arcade under an ancient house with eaves and gables, after the picturesque style of olden times, he led his horse up the steep ascent as far as the village hostelry, near the top. Having hired a room and partaken of his usual humble fare, he sallied forth to make observations and prepare for his work. A large loft in the course of erection was engaged for the evening, and the important functionary whose duty it was to make public announcements not a little startled the villagers by the novel notice that a religious meeting would be held at seven o'clock, concluding with an ejaculation of his own—"I hope you'll all go and get better." The unusual demeanour and rigid regimen of their guest excited the curiosity of the host and hostess. One of the domestics approached the door of the room which the stranger occupied, and was somewhat surprised to hear his voice as though in conversation with another. As she listened she found that he was engaged in earnest pleading with God for his blessing on the coming service: religious convictions were awakened in her heart, and she eventually became the first member of the Methodist Church in that village.

By the time appointed for the commencement of the service the room was well filled. There was nothing of ecclesiastical propriety in the arrangements of the evening. A kitchen table served for a pulpit, and the people stood around to hear the Word of Life, which, coming from a full heart, reached the hearts of the whole

congregation. The success which attended this service led the preacher to announce that he would preach there again on that day fortnight: on his return, however, on the day appointed, he was informed that the clergyman had used his influence with the Squire to prevent any more religious services being held in the room formerly occupied, and the congregation adjourned to a private house which was placed at their disposal by one of the villagers. At the service the Word came with such power from the lips of the Minister that many were awakened: a small society was formed, and Clovelly received regular visits from the missionaries in the Bideford Circuit.

Further difficulties, however, had to be encountered. On a subsequent occasion Mr. Haime found, as he neared the village, that the Squire had given strict injunctions that if any of his tenants harboured the Methodists they should at once be ejected from their houses. As nearly every tenement in the village belonged to this one individual, he naturally thought that his arbitrary order would have had the effect of at once crushing the movement; but one member of the congregation who lived in his own freehold, freely placed his house at the disposal of the missionary, and the offer was gladly accepted. His was a zeal which many waters could not quench. He directed the man to announce that there would be preaching in his own house on the following evening, and at once started for Exeter on horseback to procure the necessary licence. The preacher and his horse were on the best of terms with each other. "Jack" was muscular, well-fed, and fit for any work. To provide for any casualty in the dark lanes which he habitually traversed the initials "C. H." were branded in large letters on his flank; and to lighten the faithful

animal's labour it was no uncommon thing for the missionary to dismount, throw the reins on its neck, and, with coat off, walk the rugged hills, thus pushing more rapidly on his journeys.

At the appointed time on the following evening Mr. Haime was seen descending the slopes of Clovelly with the required document in his possession, and although during the twenty-four hours he had travelled 120 miles, he preached to the assembled people. Thus opposition was vanquished, and the Word of God mightly prevailed.

The first convert to the faith in the village was Mrs. Whitefield, already referred to, who maintained an eminently Christian course for a period of fifty years. She was a devout and saintly woman,* and her holy and

* Mrs. Whitefield was probably one of the heroines of Canon Kingsley's novel, who figures in his description of the excursion to Lundy Island as the Lady Superioress, sitting on the deck of a steamer in the midst of a Methodist party, singing Wesley's Hymns. Any notice of Clovelly would have been incomplete without a reference to the religious spirit which pervades the inhabitants. Even the gifted author of *Two Years Ago* pays a tribute to the moral tone of the village, in his description of Grace Harvey and Frank Headley, where he says that "petty crimes are almost unknown among the Vikings' sons of Aberalva Town," and also in his reference to the fishermen of the village, of whom he speaks "as a hearty, intelligent, and brave set of fellows as ever walked the earth." He also recognises the source whence they derived their force of character:—"All that the Aberalva fishermen know of God or righteousness they have learnt from the *soi-disant* followers of John Wesley;" and Frank Headley finds to his sorrow that he has "to make up the arrears of half-a-century of base neglect." This is but too true: within a comparatively recent period there were to be found on this coast brave and noble spirits, renowned for their heroic deeds by sea and land, and endowed with fine natural capabilities, who, if at all, only learnt to read in advanced age after their minds had been awakened to spiritual things by the preaching of these humble labourers. Yet these fine-spirited men were under the spiritual charge of the clergy of a richly-endowed Church who now look askance on the recusant communions which enfold them, and when too late are seeking—sometimes unfairly—to win them back again to the Mother Church. The terms in which acknowledgment is made of the labours of the Methodists are not, perhaps, in themselves exceptionable, when allowance is made for the license accorded to a writer of fiction; but this is more than can be said of the references to the com-

consistent example exerted an influence not only on the church of which she was a member and Leader, but on the community generally. Her Christian character partook of the spirit of the devoted evangelist from whom she received her first impressions of the Truth. She lived "as seeing Him who is invisible," and her vivid apprehension of spiritual things gave a solemnity and earnestness to her general deportment which ever impressed the mind that religion was a reality, by her seen, felt, and experienced. The genuineness of her piety was manifested in her daily walk. The sick and the dying sought the consolations of religion at her hands, and amidst the ever-recurring casualties incidental to a seafaring life, frequently plunging families into sudden and overwhelming distress, the widow and the fatherless ever found in her a sympathising friend.

For many years Mrs. Whitefield most hospitably entertained the preachers at her house during their periodical visits to Clovelly, and many living ministers, both lay and clerical, can bear witness to the kind and affectionate greeting they always received from her.

munity in other parts of the work. In all ethnological speculations due importance has always been attached to the mother's influence on her offspring, but Canon Kingsley altogether ignores this in the history of Grace Harvey—the representative woman of Aberalva—where the mother is the only unlovely figure in a picture otherwise bright and beautiful. In a fascinating romance fiction acquires more force than truth, and from the sketch of the ideal Class Leader—the scold, the hypocrite, and the wrecker—the youthful reader will naturally gather his conception of these deaconesses of the Church. Nothing could be more wanting in truthfulness, as Canon Kingsley, who has lived in the village, must well know, although he has veiled his charge against the Methodist community by speaking of Bryanites, of whom there are none in the place; but even the possible occurrence of such a case within a wide range could not justify such a stigma upon the women of Clovelly. The reference is as offensive as it is erroneous, and is highly disparaging to a Christian body to whom the villagers owe their moral and religious elevation,—a community which is known not to be addicted to such practices,—and especially to the female portion of a respectable and Christian population.

The villagers both respected and loved her, and her house in Clovelly was a centre of Methodist influence. There the weekly Class-Meetings of the society were held, and many a young convert was encouraged to press onward to the "prize of his high calling." For many years she lived in widowhood, her husband having been early taken from her; and during the latter period of her life she passed through much trial; but although her mind was for some time deeply clouded by affliction, she was enabled to triumph through Divine grace.

From that day to this, Clovelly, though situated at a distance of eleven miles from Bideford, has always been a favourite field of labour both to the Circuit and local preachers: no place is more cheerfully visited, and no place to many of them is more hallowed by sacred associations and blessed memories.

In after years, as the cause advanced, and a chapel was erected, the Baronet of Clovelly Court withdrew his opposition, and the domestics were allowed to attend the services. Several members of the family became decided Christians, and joined with the little Methodist community in Sabbath School instruction, the children being accustomed to attend one service at the parish church during the day. It was an interesting sight to witness the accomplished lady of the house listening to the preaching of the humble evangelist (of limited education, but of vigorous mind and "mighty in the Scriptures") and giving him a word of encouragement and welcome. One of the ladies of the Court afterwards became, in another neighbourhood, a regular attendant on the Wesleyan Ministry, and a recognized member of the Society.

Among other places into which Mr. Haime introduced Methodism was the adjoining parish of Hartland, under

the following interesting circumstances. One morning as he was leaving Clovelly he was accosted by a woman, a stranger, who earnestly requested that he would come and preach in the village in which she resided, offering at the same time to entertain him and to provide a room in which to hold a religious service. He assented, and a day was fixed for the visit. The house to which the preacher had been so hospitably invited was that of Mr. and Mrs. Hambly, of Goulsom Farm, but not until it was too late did it occur to him that he had neither inquired the person's name or residence: believing, however, that the same God who directed Jacob to the house of Laban would direct him to this earnest inquirer after the Truth, on the day appointed he saddled his horse and threaded his way through the intricate high-ways of Hartland parish.* Throwing the reins on the neck of his horse he allowed it to take its own course, and at length the road opened to a large farm-stead where the owner was standing on a hillock, as if earnestly looking for some one. This led to a mutual recognition, and Mr. Haime rejoiced to find himself at the house to which he had been invited. A considerable number assembled at the appointed time, several of whom embraced Christianity, and joined themselves

* Mr. Haime ever recognised the leadings of Divine Providence in the minutest concerns of life, and an interesting instance is recorded by his biographer in which God eminently honoured his simple faith. After a protracted evening service in a distant village, during a time of revival he had to ride a distance of thirteen miles over a dangerous common. There was no defined road, and the night was very dark. On approaching a part of the moor in which there were several deep bogs, the horse began to show signs of fear and repeatedly drew back. The rider alighted, and for some distance led the animal, slowly feeling his way. In this extremity he betook himself to prayer, when suddenly his path became encircled with light: he remounted his faithful animal, and thankfully resumed his homeward journey. It was afterwards discovered that a hayrick had caught on fire in an unaccountable way, and by this extraordinary coincidence the servant of God was delivered.

together in Church fellowship. Regular services were appointed to be held, and in the house of this excellent couple for upwards of fifty years the Wesleyan Ministers found a hospitable home ; and they were themselves made the instruments of great good to the surrounding neighbourhood.

The details of Mr. Haime's labours in North Devon are not on record, but the following incident will afford an example of the success which attended his missionary work. In Southmolton, where his ministrations had excited great interest notwithstanding the prejudiced reports which had gained circulation, a resident, whose feelings of hostility had been aroused against the preacher, threatened that he would do him some bodily injury, and thus silence him for ever. Acting upon the advice of his wife, however, he went to hear him for himself, and the Word fastened upon his conscience ; he became a changed man, and, subsequently, not only joined the Church, but zealously laboured as a Local-preacher.

The earnestness and devotedness of Mr. Haime's ministry may be gathered from the large increase to the Societies in the Circuits in which he laboured of nearly 6,000 members. During his two years' superintendence of the Bideford mission the numbers increased four-fold. In the four Circuits in Cornwall in which he successively travelled, on leaving the North of Devon, there were extraordinary revivals, in which the converts numbered no less than 4,353 ; and on his visiting the county thirty years afterwards thousands of those whom he had been instrumental in bringing to the knowledge of the Truth, and their descendants, welcomed him to their chapels, which could not contain the crowds which came to hear him preach. The scene of his most remarkable success was in the Redruth Circuit, 2,500

persons being added to the various Societies, in the course of about two months. For a considerable period the chapel at Redruth itself was open day and night, and the Ministers of the Circuit—the Revs. Charles Haime, Francis Truscott, John Slater, and Seth Morris—conducted the glorious services which were held, in turn. The Leaders and members also threw themselves into the movement with godly zeal. Referring to this revival Mr. Haime remarks—"We found a prepared Church;" and Mr. Truscott, an eminently-devoted and Christian Pastor, observed of the same occasion—"We were favoured with such an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit as I never before witnessed." In these hallowed scenes, Mr. Haime was well qualified to be the leading spirit. While, however, he possessed a temperament which gave him a natural qualification for entering into these manifestations of strong religious feeling, he ever reverently waited for the descent of the Holy Spirit. He possessed a clear-sighted and soul-thrilling perception of the world's danger,* and while he pealed forth the thunders of the Law many a sleeper was aroused to a sense of his position; but his earnestness in sounding the alarm received its chief force from his heartfelt faith in the sufficiency of the Gospel remedy: he delighted to dwell on the atonement; and the Saviour's declaration, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," seemed to have been written on his soul by the finger of God.

His life was one of entire consecration to the service of his Divine Master. His strength lay in the closet—"he had power with God and prevailed"—and as a consequence he was greatly honoured as an instrument

* "In prayer this evening," says Henry Martyn in one place, I "had such near and terrific views of God's judgment upon sinners in hell that my flesh trembled for fear of them."

of righteousness. Writing to one of his sons in the ministry he remarks: "What is a man in the pulpit without the Holy Ghost? There may be learning, eloquence, address, talents, but without this there will be neither life or power." He has been known to spend a whole night in prayer, and if at the close of a Sabbath evening's discourse there were no marks of "signs following," his concluding prayer would be a prolonged wrestling with God for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. The closing scene of his life was solemn and impressive. He was accustomed to dwell with much pleasure on the promise "He that keepeth my sayings shall not see death;" and in his case this was almost literally fulfilled. When eighty years of age he again spent a few weeks in Cornwall with his son. He prayed in public with extraordinary power, and then returned home to die. He imperceptibly passed away in the presence of his friends, on the 5th of November, 1855, in the fifty-fourth year of his ministry.

In 1808, William Sleep and Richard Tomlinson succeeded Mr. Haime in the North of Devon, but at the expiration of a few months the latter retired from the work of the ministry. Mr. Sleep's first efforts were directed to the introduction of Methodism into Buckland Brewer, near Bideford. He was accustomed to ride frequently through the village, and being deeply affected at seeing the moral and religious condition of the inhabitants he resolved as early as possible to preach to them. Mr. Ashton and Mr. Rendle, two attached friends of the cause then residing at Bideford, entered heartily into his design, and readily offered every assistance in their power: on the missionary's visit to the village, however, all his attempts to procure a room in which to preach proved unsuccessful,—every door was

shut against him, and the case appeared hopeless. In this moment of suspense a little girl of eight or nine years of age came, almost breathless, to Mr. Sleep, and told him that she had been to her mother and desired her to allow him to preach in the long-room of their house, and that her request had been cheerfully acceded to. The house was the "Bell Inn," which was occupied by a Mrs. Dannell. The unexpected invitation was received with the warmest expressions of gratitude, as little Mary led the way to a large room which was appropriated to the use of a friendly society. The seats were arranged in order as if designed for a large congregation, and no time was lost in making known to the villagers the fact that a religious service would be held there. At the appointed hour the room was filled from end to end by an attentive congregation, who listened with the greatest seriousness to an address delivered by the Minister from the solemn injunction—"Prepare to meet thy God." A Divine influence rested on the preacher and people. Invitations had been issued for a large dancing party at a farm house on the same evening, but the novelty of Methodist preaching in the village proved such a powerful attraction that they relinquished their anticipated pleasure, and went in a body to the service. The aged matron who was to have entertained the company became so affected by the forcible presentation of Gospel truth that she gave audible expression to her feelings in the presence of the whole congregation. "Oh, where have I spent my seventy years," she exclaimed, "that I have not thought of these things sooner? Oh, the hardness of my heart! Oh, the sinfulness of my life! What shall I do to be saved?" Her heart being opened to the Lord, she cheerfully opened her house to receive the servants of

God who came to show sinners the way of salvation. "If you will accept of my house," she said, "it is at your service: it is large, and one room shall be set apart for the preaching of the Gospel." The Minister gladly accepted the hearty invitation, and ever found there a hospitable home. Frequent supplications ascended to the Throne of Grace on behalf of the large family, and under their roof multitudes had proclaimed to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. Mr. Sleep formed a Society there, and twelve of the family became members, together with several others who were deeply convinced of sin and earnest in their desire to flee from the wrath to come. Mr. and Mrs. Curtis—for this was the name of the family—maintained a steady attachment to the cause; and although the latter had reached the allotted threescore years and ten before she received the light of the Gospel, she lived after that twenty-five years, a faithful and devoted servant of Christ. At ninety years of age she was a zealous collector for the Missions, feeling an earnest desire to send the Gospel, which she felt to be the power of God unto her own salvation, to the ends of the earth. Her daughter and son-in-law (Mr. and Mrs. Fulford) and their descendants have maintained their attachment to Methodism and largely sustained the cause in Buckland and elsewhere. Mr. Fulford built a commodious chapel in the village, in connection with which a Sabbath School has been established, which has proved to be a valuable auxiliary to the society. Among those who have emigrated to various parts of the world from this parish may be found many local-preachers and members belonging to the Methodist communion, who bear grateful testimony to the good they received in connection with the little church at Buckland Brewer.

CHAPTER VI.



CONTINUED MISSIONARY EFFORT.—

REV. WILLIAM BEAL.

“The Christian beam
Illuminates my faith, and bids me trust
All that may happen to the will of Heaven.
New force inspires me and my strengthen'd soul
Feels energy divine; the fair example
Of steadfast martyrs and of dying saints has warned me to better
thoughts: I now
Can, with a smile, behold misfortune's face.”—HAYARD.

DURING the year 1808, William Beal,* whose name stood in the Minutes of Conference as missionary in the Exeter Circuit, was appointed to fill Mr. Tomlinson's place in the Bideford mission.

Mr. Beal was born at Devonport, in the year 1785, where his father held a situation under the “Store-keeper” in the Devonport Government Dock-yard. When only eleven months old, death removed his father and he was cast on the bounty of that God “in whom the fatherless find mercy.” From this period Mr. Beal became a resident at Trembraes, near Liskeard, Cornwall, at the abode of his maternal grandfather, Gilbert, who there occupied a farm. Eight or nine miles from this “loveliest village of the plain,” and

* For the facts contained in this Chapter, the Author is indebted to a published Sketch of Mr. Beal's early history, and further notes supplied by himself or Mr. S. Pearse, of Torrington, and others.

Liskeard, is Trelawn, the seat of the Trelawny family, and Sir Harry, the then head of the house, was a zealous preacher of the Gospel. Among those who were greatly benefited by his ministry and favoured by his kind notice, were the relatives of Mr. Beal, and especially his mother and uncle. When circumstances removed this celebrated preacher, others, like-minded, were sought. At this period neither of the four Wesleyan preachers, who had half the county (Cornwall east) for their Circuit, came often to Liskeard. The supply was generally obtained from the then very respectable local-preachers of Devonport. At Trembraes, these good men found a hospitable home, and the child they found there, whose parents they had known in their own town, claimed their special and affectionate notice. At this period Methodism and its few friends in east Cornwall were treated with the utmost derision and contempt. On one occasion a large mob attacked the window immediately behind the pulpit of the humble thatched meeting house, in Castle-street, and violently molested the congregation assembled for worship; and the thrill of horror awakened in the mind of the young child may well be depicted, as they approached the pulpit, where he was seated, vociferating "Burn Trudgeon (the preacher) and Tom Paine." Amidst such scenes his childhood passed, and they caused him to be the more identified in all the concerns and in all the interests of what was then the only existing form of Christianity known to him except the Church, to which he was led every Sunday afternoon.

At the age of seventeen, through the influence of Mr. Edward Budd, a refugee from Ireland during the rebellion in that country, and who afterwards became the promoter and editor of the *West Briton* Newspaper,

he was led to join the Society, and became a member of his class. Though, from a child, taught by an affectionate mother and counting it an honour to be in any way the servant of Methodism, he did not as yet apprehend the way of a sinner's approach to God; but under the Christian direction of Mr. Budd, his mind was opened to see the Scriptural way of salvation—that to “him that worketh not,” and believeth on Him “that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Mr. Beal was early called to engage in scenes of usefulness, and was placed by Dr. Coke in charge of a class in the first Sunday-school established in Liskeard. When about twenty years of age, he was called to preach in the surrounding villages; but shrinking from the responsibilities of these public religious duties, he left his home for Devonport, resolved, without making himself known, to observe the intimations of Providence in a strange place.

The Rev. John Burdsall was then labouring in the Devonport Circuit, and Mr. Beal embraced an early opportunity to hear him preach in the adjoining town of Plymouth. The text chosen for the occasion was from Mark vii. 24; “And from thence He arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid.” The remarkable selection of the text, and the suitability of the sermon to his case, led Mr. Beal to seek an early interview with this eminent preacher. Mr. Burdsall became his counsellor and friend, and led him on in the apprehension, love, and pursuit of Gospel truth. Previously to his entering the ministry in 1808, Mr. Beal laboured for nearly two years in Exeter as a Local-preacher and on his devoting himself entirely to the work, his first appointment was in the same city.

Up to this period, Methodism was unknown in the south-east of Devon, from Exmouth to the borders of Dorset; and to supply this deficiency, on Exeter becoming the head of a Circuit, in 1808, Mr. Beal was appointed as a missionary to labour in this part of the county, as the colleagues of William Fowler and James Spink, the then Ministers of the Exeter Circuit. Previously to his entering the ministry, Mr. Beal had established preaching in Crediton; and having obtained the co-operation of Mr. Samuel Kerslake, of that town, and the concurrence of the leading friends of Exeter, on the 4th of May, 1808, he held the first public service in the refectory of the old Deanery connected with Eadulf's Crediton See. Mr. William Aver, who was appointed to North Devon, in 1797, is reported to have preached in the old Presbyterian (then Arian) Chapel, and to have taken for his text 1 Cor. xiv. 8.—“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?” In the suburbs of the town a local-preacher from the north, named Ryan, occasionally held religious services, but not in Crediton itself. At Topsham, also, in a cottage below the church, the public services of Methodism were introduced by Mr. Beal.

The district in which he was called to labour extended eastward from Exmouth and Sidmouth to Honiton and the villages on each side of the Blackdown Hills. In many of these parts a Methodist had never before been seen, and scarcely even heard of; and in his first essay, the indifference of the people he sought to benefit and the opposition he met with, were sufficient to damp ordinary zeal, and it required the aid of commanding principle, and not a little fortitude, to sustain him in his work. In many places he could

not obtain the use of a cottage, and was obliged to preach in the public road and to seek food and beds at public inns. At length preaching-places were opened at Exmouth, Otterton, Newton Poppleford, Ottery, Honiton (as the central place), Wilmington, Awliscombe, a village near Henbury Fort, etc., Kentisbeare, Uffculme, and occasionally other places, extending as far as Westbury-Leigh, near Sampford Peverell. After five months' arduous labour, our young missionary was rejoiced to find his efforts crowned with some success; but to his great regret, when the rough places had become comparatively plain, his anticipations were disappointed by his unexpected removal to Bideford, to supply the place of Mr. Tomlinson.

After the difficulties which had beset his course when he entered upon his work, it was a pleasing change to Mr. Beal to find himself in his new sphere, surrounded by kind and intelligent friends who cheered him on amidst the anxieties attendant upon his ministerial labours. In the towns and villages around, preaching places had been established and comfortable homes provided for the Minister. At Barnstaple there was ever a welcome at the house of Mr. Avery; at Georgeham, Mr. Prole's; at Loxhore, Mr. J. Gould's; at Brayford, Mr. W. Gould's; at Northmolton and Twitchen, Mr. May's and Mr. Gellard's; at Southmolton, Mr. Thorne's; at Chulmleigh, at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Wrentmore,—who were highly respected in that town, and exerted a good religious influence; at Becket, in the parish of Stoke, in the hospitable house of Mr. John Gould; at Swymbridge, Mr. and Mrs. Vickery's; at Landkey, Mr. Joshua Gould's, Hole Farm; at Fremington, Mr. Verney's; at Instow, at the house of Mr. Lill, an excellent farmer of Lincoln-

shire, who was afterwards accidentally killed; at Bideford, at the house of Mr. Ashton—a well-informed man—and Mr. Rendle, from Polperro, in Cornwall; at Appledore, Mr. Williams; at Hartland, Mr. and Mrs. Hambly; at Clovelly, Mrs. Whitefield; at Buckland Brewer, Mr. and Mrs. Curtis; at Great Torrington, Mr. Cock; at Wear Gifford, “good tall Mr. Tallin,” rendered some valuable service. There were also services held in a boat-shed at Ilfracombe, and in a room at Combmartin. In most of these places the labours of the missionaries were exciting some interest, and Societies were established. Torrington, however, still maintained its ignoble pre-eminence in hostility to the truth.

Torrington was the scene of the labours of the eloquent and pious John Howe, whose writings are handed down as a rich legacy to the Church. The pulpit in which he preached previously to his being ejected from his living, still remains. In his works he delineates not only the character of his own times, but also with something like prophetic accuracy, spoke of those which should come. “I must tell you freely my apprehension,” he writes; “I fear that religion must *die first*. I fear it for it hath long been gradually *dying already*, and spiritually, diseases that have this tendency, are both *sinful* and *penal*. But though serious piety and religion languishes everywhere, let us believe it shall revive.”* Nonconformity had at the close of the last century almost died out in Torrington. The original Howe Chapel, in Well-street, was falling into ruins, and the pulpit was supplied by occasional lay-preachers from Barnstaple. In 1807, however, Mr.

* Funeral Sermon on the death of Dr. Wm. Bates, by John Howe, M.A., fol. edit., 1724. Vol. ii., p. 458.

Thomas Wilson, of London, feeling a great interest in the place, at his own expense sent down a young student, Mr. Ephraim Jackson, to minister to the congregation. Mr. Jackson remained for nearly forty years in the town, and succeeded in sustaining the languishing cause.*

It cannot be ascertained when Methodist services were first regularly held in Torrington, but when Mr. Beal entered upon the work of the Circuit, it formed a part of his ministerial duty to visit that town, and a cottage in Mill-street was occupied as a preaching-place. The zeal with which he entered on his work excited the hostility of some of the leading inhabitants, who concerted an organized attack on the preacher and congregation on his next visit. Information of this had reached Mr. Beal, but nothing daunted, he walked from Buckland Brewer, where he had been preaching, and entered the town at the appointed time. Outside the preaching room a mob had already begun to collect, and as soon as the service began, the congregation was assailed with hooting and yells. The number of the mob continued to increase, and there was a consequent increase of clamour and noise, "the effect of which," says a narrator, "was heightened by the blowing of horns, and the clatter of kettles and other metallic fragments." At length, "as if maddened by the continuance of the service, the very tempest of what appeared to be the wild orgies of Satan followed." The windows were smashed, and stones were thrown into the midst of the congregation, until they were obliged to fly for their lives. Within they were threatened with personal injury, and without, greater perils awaited

* Through the zealous efforts of the late Rev. J. Buckpitt, the old Howe Chapel was superseded by a neat and commodious building in 1848.

them. On their entering the street they were hustled about, and an attempt made to throw them down. The mob then formed a line on either side of the street, and commenced an attack with stones and mud, the women holding the missiles in their aprons and supplying the men with them. Among the congregation were several respectable females, and as they were assailed, one of them named Miss Higman, the daughter of a respectable manufacturer of the town, received a dangerous wound in the head. Her shrieks brought the preacher to her assistance, and she was borne, her garments saturated with blood, to the nearest house, where medical aid was procured. At length the stock of stones was exhausted, but the mob, still intent on their purpose, pursued the preacher and his flock, and bespattered them with mud, until, bruised and covered with dirt, they reached a place of refuge. It was now currently reported that "the parson was wounded, and would never be able to preach again, and that as for Croscombe (the Rev. W. Croscombe, afterwards for many years a laborious missionary in British America), he was killed." The next morning, however, Mr. Beal waited on the Mayor (Mr. Stoneman), and both he and his wife received him courteously and showed him great sympathy and kindness. Some, though not the chief, of the rioters were summoned to appear at the next Torrington Sessions. Though unaccustomed to the procedure of courts of justice, our young missionary, imbued with the spirit of the early champions of the Truth, ably pleaded his own cause, though he had arrayed against him the Town Clerk, and one of the magistrates,—a Mr. Vickery,—who was exceedingly bitter and sarcastic, and who he afterwards learned was the father of the ringleader of the mob. The result of the investigation was that the

accused were bound over to appear at the next Quarter Sessions for the county, and the little Society was not again disturbed for several years. Thus terminated the second Torrington riot.

On visiting Torrington some forty years after this, it was the pleasure of Mr. Beal to find that he had to preach in a commodious Wesleyan Chapel at the head of the very same street which was the scene of his former persecution, and nearly opposite the spot where the young lady referred to was so fearfully injured. Another pleasing surprise to the preacher was the discovery that Peter Hoare, then an old man, who had acted as one of the horn-blowers on the occasion of the riot, was the sexton of the chapel in which he preached, and warmly interested in the cause. He was informed also of the wretched end of the chief actors in that deplorable scene, and especially of the ringleader, who became a self-immured recluse, never leaving his room, and isolating himself from all society.

Amid the numerous engagements of his wide sphere of labour, Mr. Beal found time for the cultivation of a naturally vigorous mind; and his studies were not confined to theological subjects, but embraced various branches of science and literature, geology in particular having for him a special interest. His well-stored mind, combined with a ready and forcible delivery, qualified him to fill the most important stations in the Connexion, and he laboured with great acceptance in Portsmouth, Sheffield, Truro, Weymouth, Devonport, Manchester, Bristol, London, and other places. He also contributed scientific articles to the magazines, and in later life was known as a popular lecturer on scientific subjects in connection with the Polytechnic, in London. Still later, when approaching his ninetieth year, Mr. Beal

was engaged in interesting newspaper controversy on archæological subjects.

At the Conference of 1809, Mr. Beal was stationed in the Launceston Circuit, which had that year been divided, and now extended from Linkinhorne on the south, to Morwenstow, Kilkhampton, and Holsworthy on the north, nearly bordering on the sphere of his former labour. Among the places then included in the Circuit, was the ancient little town of Stratton, near which lies Stampford Hill, the scene of a battle between the Royalists (under the command of Sir Bevil Grenville) and the Parliamentary forces, in the reign of Charles. Not far distant lay the ancient seat of the Grenville family, Stowe; and five miles from the town is the village of Kilkhampton, in the churchyard of which Hervey wrote his "Meditations among the Tombs."*

At Stratton a cause had been established, for some years, under the fostering care of Mr. Petherick and Mr. R. Bevan. A chapel was opened for worship in 1805, and connected with the Society were, among others, members of the Hayman and Uglow families, who afterwards became better known as Mrs. John Pope,† Mrs. William Burt, of Plymouth, and others. But especially associated with earlier years, is the memory of one of its lowliest dwellings, and especially of her who lived in it.‡ Molly Short's cottage, mean as some might have thought it, became the centre of missionary

* Watkins, the historian of Bideford, in referring to the labours of the Rev. Mr. Hervey, who was curate at Bideford in 1738, remarks, "Instead of establishing and assisting assemblies for the diversion of the gay, he held agreeable societies with the more rational part of the people for promoting piety and friendship among them."

† Mrs. Pope was the mother of the Rev. W. B. Pope, the President of Didsbury College.

‡ See "Banks of the Tamar," by Rev. W. S. Christophers, *Christian Miscellany*, 1860.

action. Once a month, at the least, it was by turns the preachers' study and boarding house, as well as preaching room. Whether Molly were a widow or otherwise, like her of Zarepath she was ready to share her morsel with the servant of the Lord, yea to honour him by providing him with the better fare. She lived on barley bread herself, but always provided a wheaten loaf for the servant of God, and the purchase of this luxury was a sure token, to her neighbours, that the missionary was at hand. Nor could she be content without having a share in the honour of contributing to the support of that cause which she had espoused,—out of her weekly pittance, the consecrated penny was always put aside on the shelf. That was holy, however she herself might fare. God honoured that woman. He created a "church in her house." The blessed Spirit hallowed her cottage by making it the scene of many conversions, and within her humble apartment there sprang up the first fruits of that wide harvest which afterwards enriched so many houses both far and near. Here William Hayman, then a lad of eleven or twelve years of age, received those early impressions and convictions, which resulted in his sound conversion, and which marked his experience during his whole course as an able and successful Minister of Christ. As he knelt by the old dresser in that humble cottage, he felt his heart softened by thoughts of the Saviour, and as he wept and prayed he became impressed with a sense of awe so mingled with the tenderest filial feeling towards God, that he felt the Divine Comforter had touched his soul and given him the assurance that his heavenly Father was well pleased. In that cottage, too, the same lad, moved by the warmth of his "first love" to Christ, made his earliest effort to persuade his neighbours to be reconciled to God. At

the age of fourteen, he entered earnestly into all the religious services which were held in the town, and which were now being extended to the villages in the surrounding neighbourhood, and between that time and his entering upon the work of the ministry was made extensively useful.


Previous to his conversion, his genial and hearty temperament had made him a general favourite, and in the limited circle of so small a population, these extraordinary proceedings were soon noised abroad and became the subject of general remark. There was the resident doctor, skilful in his profession, shrewd but good-natured, orthodox in his churchmanship but somewhat liberal in his views. Dr. K. met the unsuspecting boy a few days after his attempt to fill the missionary's place at the end of the cottage table, and, taking him by the button, said to him—"Master Billy, they tell me that you have been preaching; where did you get your text?" "From the Lord, Sir," was the reply. "O! ah! and pray, how did you divide it?" "By grace, Sir." This was too much for the doctor, with his sense of humour; but he was not to be beaten,—another opportunity presented itself.

It was the practice of the Methodists of those days to partake of the Lord's Supper at the Parish Church, especially where no chapel had been erected. Previous to admission to the ordinance, the clergyman at Stratton required that the communicants should have been confirmed. The youthful convert would not allow this to stand in the way of his compliance with this Divine requirement, and he resolved to attend the next Confirmation Service held by the Bishop. The ceremony was to take place in a distant town. He could command a horse, but lacking a saddle, he ventured to call on his old

friend, Dr. K., to borrow one. The doctor accosted him with his usual cordiality—"Well, Master Billy, what now then?" "I wish to ask, Sir, whether you would kindly lend me a saddle." "A saddle!" replied the doctor, "and where are you going?" "To Launceston, Sir," was the reply. "And what calls you there?" "I am going to be confirmed, Sir." "Confirmed!" exclaimed the doctor, "never! you are not going back to confirmation, to be sure; I thought you had gone on to perfection." This reproof, under the colour of a joke, led the lad to reflect upon what the Apostle meant by "perfection," and how he was to understand the caution—"Not laying again the foundation of repentance. . . . and the laying on of hands," and his advance towards maturity, both of Christian knowledge and power, was probably quickened thereby. "He was soon banded with a few kindred spirits in working out plans of usefulness. Their mode was to take walking tours to the neighbouring villages for the purpose of reading and praying with the secluded remnants of that scattered population, and in this way they did much to mark out the original pattern of that spiritual network which, under the name of Methodism, now spreads itself over so large a portion of that interesting district."

One of Mr. Beal's earliest appointments in the Circuit, embraced this particular locality. Mounted on horseback, with the primitive equipment of a Methodist preacher, he proceeded on his work. On entering the lower part of the town, a neat-looking house particularly attracted his attention. Intent on fulfilling his mission, he flung one of the tracts, with which he was provided, over the garden enclosure. It was entitled "The Summons,—Prepare to meet thy God." Just previously

a friend of the occupier had died, and at such a time a solemn message would be more than usually impressive. Good old Herbert quaintly says, that "a verse may find him who a sermon flies,"—a truth which was verified in this instance. The inmates almost regarded it as a summons from their departed relative, and our young missionary very soon found that the circumstance was the general topic of conversation in the town. Leaving it in the mystery in which it was involved, he proceeded the next day, after fulfilling his pastoral duties, on his journey. In passing on to his next appointment, at Morwenstow, he dispatched a number of his tracts by a miller's boy to the once celebrated Stowe, which had the effect of bringing many respectable people from the neighbourhood to attend the preaching services in Nancy Cory's cottage. Among these were members of the Adams and Hutchings families, who were relatives of the bereaved household which received the tract at Stratton. The Jewells and Littlejohns also espoused the infant cause, and a member of the former family afterwards entered the ranks of the ministry. As the fruit of these missionary labours, a son of Mr. Petherick, one of the earliest supporters of the Society, became a Congregational Minister; his daughter, also, married a Minister of the Wesleyan Methodist body. During the year Mr. Beal laboured in the Circuit, Mr. Hayman, after having completed some years of faithful service in his own neighbourhood, responded to the earnest call of Mr. Walmsley, the Superintendent Minister, and offered himself for the itinerant work.




CHAPTER VII.



THE REVIVAL OF 1810.

"Hark! the wastes have found a voice;
Lonely deserts now rejoice.
Gladsome hallelujahs sing,
All around with praises ring.
Lo! abundantly they bloom;
Lebanon is hither come;
Carmel's stores the heavens dispense,
Sharon's fertile excellence."

WESLEY.

T the Conference of 1809, Richard Moody and William Hayman were appointed to take the care of the Bideford Mission. In the latter end of August in that year, with the reluctant consent of his father, Mr. Hayman responded to this call, and left his home to enter upon that important and extensive sphere of labour. He opened his commission at Buckland Brewer, and other villages lying between his home and the town of Bideford, his opening text being, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Mr. Moody, the senior preacher in the Circuit, was a young man of considerable energy and good ability, and for two years he and his colleague worked most harmoniously together. The former dealt out the thunders of the law, while the congenial mission of the latter was "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and to comfort such as mourn."

The preaching services in Bideford at this time were held in a long room in the old Priory, which had been purchased and fitted up for the purpose by Mr. Drew, to whose early missionary labours reference has already been made. Among the early converts in this town were Mrs. Evans, wife of Mr. John Evans, shipbuilder of that town, and Mr. Ashton, a respectable grocer. The former is a name well known in connection with the Methodist cause in North Devon. She was in the habit of attending the Parish Church, with her family, in the former part of the day, and in the evening the service at the little chapel, to which she also brought her children, there being at that time but one service in the day. She was an earnest Christian, and deeply solicitous for the spiritual welfare of her native town. The many and earnest prayers she offered for her children were answered, all of them being brought in early life to a knowledge of the Truth. The messengers of the Cross always received a cordial welcome to her house, and her young charge imbibed that interest in the cause and attachment to the ministers of Christ which characterised them in after life. One daughter was married to a Wesleyan Minister, the Rev. W. Hill, and finished her course with joy many years since. The eldest was converted to God in very early life, and became a member of the Wesleyan Society. She was married to the late Mr. John How, in 1826. She was a pattern of good works, and lived in the affection and esteem of all who knew her. She was suddenly summoned to her rest in the year 1859, having just time to give a few words of loving counsel to her youngest son. The only surviving member of that generation is Mr. Thomas Evans, J.P., in whom the cause of Methodism has ever found a consistent and unflinching friend and supporter. Mrs.

Evans, Sen., was taken from her family in 1811, at an early age.

Mr. Ashton also zealously sustained the infant cause, devoting his labours and his substance to the promotion of the work of God in the district. He died in peace in the year 1813.

Among the worthies of those early days of Methodist history, however, the name of John Rendle should never be forgotten. He was a native of Polperro, in Cornwall, where his father before him had welcomed the labours of Mr. Wesley and the early preachers. In the order of Providence he was directed to Bideford, and in that town and neighbourhood consecrated the energies of a long life to one great object,—the glory of God and the salvation of souls. To his zealous and unceasing labours Methodism, under God, owed much of its prosperity and success. John Rendle was a plain, unlettered man, but possessed of a genial, loving heart which, renewed by Divine Grace, impelled him onward to every good word and work. Of him it might be truly said “he was the friend of all, the enemy of none.” The great good accomplished by this useful but unpretending servant of Christ will never be known until it shall be revealed in the last great day. The consistency of his Christian deportment, combined with his works of faith and labours of love, won for him the respect of all parties. For very many years he laboured in the Barnstaple and Bideford Circuits as a local-preacher, and in the prosecution of this work he was in labours more abundant, counting no sacrifice too great so that he might but faithfully discharge the trust committed to his care. It was no uncommon thing for him to walk eighteen or twenty miles to fill an appointment, going on the Saturday afternoon, preaching two or three times on the Sabbath,

and returning to his home and his work on the Monday morning. Not unfrequently has he been known to walk several miles on a Sunday to preach in some village, carrying one of his children in his arms or on his back to relieve his wife from too great pressure in the care of the household during his absence. As a preacher he was plain and simple in his language; but he delivered his message of mercy with a heart overflowing with Christian love and with much impassioned earnestness, and God crowned his labours with great success. To promote peace and goodwill among all classes of the community was his delight,—to accomplish this he spared no pains; he was always in readiness to enter upon such a mission of love, and few men were more successful. To benefit others was to him a delightful and congenial employment, and many a struggling tradesman felt indebted to the kindly help of Father Rendle. If he had not means of his own at command, he had the confidence of those who had, and with this influence he used to benefit and help those around him. It is also a noteworthy feature of his character that whilst possessed of so much amiability of disposition, where principle was involved he was as firm as a rock; and when filling the office of parish constable, profanity stood abashed before him, as it was well understood that a profane oath uttered in his presence was sure to be followed by a summons being issued and a fine inflicted for the offence.

In those early days persecution was rife, and to profess Methodism then was to take up the cross in earnest. Its followers had not only to endure the scorn and derision of the populace, but not unfrequently were subjected to personal violence for conscience sake. On Sunday evenings, especially during the winter months,

numbers of men and boys were accustomed to congregate around the doors of the old Priory chapel and disturb the worshippers by shouts and groans, and by letting loose sparrows into their midst which flew to the lights and put them out, leaving the congregation in darkness. On one occasion, an unruly mob, headed by a poor insane man, entered the chapel during the time of service, pulled the preacher out of the pulpit, and in his place substituted this crazy individual. But despite persecution the cause prospered; in this old chapel many souls were brought to a saving acquaintance with the Truth as it is in Jesus, and became valiant soldiers of the Cross.

Among this number, the name of John Baker stands out prominently. He was a working shipwright, but his father, Nicholas Baker, being a man of some little property, had given his son a much better education than commonly fell to the lot of the working shipwrights of that day. John Baker, through the instrumentality of Methodism, was soundly converted to God. He was a man of iron nerve and of firm resolve,—one of those men whom the late Sir Fowell Buxton describes as “of invincible energy and unconquerable determination; a purpose once formed, and death or victory.” A man of this stamp, with his resolves sanctified by Divine Grace, was a valuable acquisition to the little band of Methodist workers in those early days. Nobly did he stand in the breach, and boldly did he proclaim himself on the Lord’s side. Persecutors stood confounded in his presence, and before the glance of his keen eye and determined mien those who conspired to disturb the worship of God fled in dismay. He became a zealous Local-preacher, and with heart and soul he laboured to promote the prosperity of God’s cause among the people with whom

he had cast in his lot. The villages in the neighbourhood were regularly visited and preaching places established, and to Mr. Baker, in conjunction with Father Rendle, the inhabitants of Clovelly are mainly indebted for the neat chapel in which they now worship; at any rate their names were most prominent in the Trust deed. Mr. Baker subsequently offered himself to the Conference for Missionary work, and was accepted and sent to Western Africa in the year 1818. His strong constitution enabled him to labour with success for several years in that enervating climate, during which time he buried all his colleagues in the work; and the Ministers of the Church Missionary Society, also labouring in the same locality, had during the same period succumbed to the deadly influence of the climate. Ultimately Mr. Baker himself became so enfeebled that he had to leave that Mission. He spent some time in the West Indies and British America, and then returned to his own land, where he laboured in succession in many important Circuits with acceptance and success. His ministerial labours only terminated with his life. In the pulpit of the Wesleyan Chapel at Brighton, whilst engaged in that blessed employment in which he so much delighted, he was suddenly seized with an illness which terminated fatally in a few days; and thus he passed from the service of the Church militant to that of the Church triumphant. So died John Baker, one of the first fruits of early Methodism in Bideford. In the Conference records for the year 1846, he is described as a man of vigorous understanding, whose mind was richly stored with varied and useful knowledge. His public discourses were characterised by great originality and power, and were rich in evangelical truth.

Another of the early converts was William Croscombe,

who was savingly brought to God under the ministry of the Methodist preachers in this town. He became a zealous Local-preacher ; offered himself to the Conference for Missionary work ; was sent to Canada, and laboured there and in Nova Scotia with acceptance and success for many years. In the land of his adoption he closed his ministerial labours, sat down as a Supernumerary for a short time, and then gloriously entered into the rest of God's people.

Mention might also be made of the names of Illman, Whitlock, Mr. and Mrs. Lile, and many others, as among the trophies of Divine grace through the instrumentality of early Methodism in this Circuit. These, after having well served their day and generation, fell asleep, and are reckoned among those who witnessed a good confession for their Divine Master.

Among the witnesses for the Truth who were raised up at this period was one whose name deserves to be held in perpetual remembrance—William Bailey, of Alwington, near Bideford. He was a singularly devoted man of God, and through his instrumentality mainly, the commodious place of worship at Holwell was built—being, with the exception of Clovelly, the first village chapel erected in what now forms the Bideford Circuit. Subsequently he exerted himself in getting a new and capacious chapel erected at Parkham, and a neat little place of worship at Buckish Mills ; he also converted two small dwelling houses of his own into a Methodist chapel in Alwington, which on his decease he left free of debt to the Connexion. To the interests of these chapels he gave unceasing attention. He contributed liberally towards the cost of their erection, was a devoted Sunday-school Teacher, became a Class-Leader and Society-Steward, and by great consis-

tency of character, by earnest self-denying labour in the cause of his Divine Master, by his unvarying kindness of disposition and the uniform courtesy of his demeanour, he won the esteem even of the enemies of Methodism. In all the places mentioned, the name of Bailey still lives in honoured remembrance, so that "being dead he yet speaketh."

The number of preaching places had now greatly increased, and it became necessary to supply the deficiency of ministerial agency by the regular appointment of Local-preachers. Many persons were already enrolled in the various Societies, who were accustomed to conduct religious services in their respective homes, and their assistance was now enlisted to pay regular visits to all the places opened for preaching. The first Circuit plan was made in 1810, in which were the names of John Avery, of Barnstaple; William Wrentmore, of Chulmleigh; John Pascoe, of Bideford; George Beer, of Brayford. In the second plan the name of John Rendle, of Bideford, also appeared. The zealous efforts made resulted in the general prosperity of the cause in town and country; and at the close of their two years' labour, the Ministers of the Circuit had the satisfaction of finding that the number of members had increased from 100 to 337.

Among the places in which preaching was regularly established were the villages of Landkey and Swymbridge. In these parishes, the presentation to which is vested in the Dean and Chapter of Exeter, the tithes had fallen into the hands of a lay impropiator, and "duty" of both churches was at that time performed by one non-resident curate of no religious power and of indifferent character. But "like people like priest,"—this state of things suited the prevailing taste of the times. Fighting,

wrestling, drunkenness, cock-fighting, were the ordinary avocations of the Sabbath-day, and on the annual "Revel Sunday," close to the doors of the sanctuary, various stalls would be erected, and scenes of drunkenness continued through the night and carried far into the following week. On the Sunday previous to the wrestling match, the prize—generally a hat trimmed with ribbons, and stuck round with spoons—would be introduced into the church. A man, appointed for the purpose, would march from the publichouse, after the service had commenced, and wearing the hat through the aisles would hang it up in front of the gallery to be seen by the congregation when they rose to sing "to the praise and glory of God."

The first attempt to preach at Landkey was made by Mr. Moody, who took his stand near the bridge which crosses the stream at the higher end of the village. He selected for his text the passage "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men;" but the tide of opposition was so great that the preacher's voice was drowned amidst the yells and uproar of the crowd.*

The first room which was opened for preaching was in the cottage of George Mock, and the premises of

* The following incident, although it is not within the province of our present history, will serve to illustrate the Missionary enterprise of this period: Mr. Hayman was preaching in the open air at Crediton, on the annual fair day, and the market-place was very crowded. Having taken his stand and opened the service, while he was engaged in prayer some one in the crowd threw a missile at the preacher, which the latter with considerable agility warded off from his face and caught in his hand. The dexterity with which this was accomplished turned the sympathy of the crowd in his favour, and they listened attentively, amidst the busy scenes of a country fair, to his gospel message. Several instances are on record in which that sermon was the instrument of sound conversion to God. Sixteen years after this, in the year 1828, Mr. Hayman was preaching in one of the London chapels during the Annual Conference, when he was accosted by a stranger, who gratefully referred to this scene in the street of Crediton as the occasion of his decision for God.

Messrs Thomas and Michael Tossell were afterwards occupied for the purpose. Those who assembled for worship were subjected to the usual annoyances and interruptions from the untutored villagers—the windows of the cottage were broken in, and the tumult without, as in the case of the outdoor service just spoken of, drowned the voice of the preacher; but the seed of Divine truth there soon fell upon good ground, and resulted in such a rich and abundant harvest, that six years after this commodious chapels were erected in both villages. The clergyman was much exasperated with these intruders, whom he denominated “ravens wolves,” and excluded a number of persons from the sacramental table at Swymbridge Church because they presumed to attend the Methodist services; but his opposition was cut short by his being suspended by the Bishop for immoral conduct.

Among those who in these early days devoted themselves to the cause, we shall fail to recognise a brighter character than that of William Tossell. He was one of the noble band of young men who by their praiseworthy perseverance succeeded in securing a site for the chapel, and, though dependent for support on his daily toil, contributed largely towards its erection. He was a man of high moral excellence, and of eminent usefulness in the Church. He was “a living epistle, known and read of all men,” and his godly example led many to the Saviour. He was retiring in his manner, but his modesty only displayed to greater advantage the rich graces of the Spirit by which he was so eminently adorned. The deep quiet and unbroken tranquillity of his soul was a living comment on the words of the Psalmist: “Great peace have they who love Thy law, and *nothing shall offend them.*” He efficiently and use-

fully filled the offices of Class-Leader, Chapel and Society Steward, and Sunday-school Teacher, for many years in connection with the Landkey Society; and so devoted was his attachment to the cause, that he would have bequeathed the little property he possessed to the chapel had he not been dissuaded from doing so by his fellow Trustees. His death was accelerated by his falling from a ladder while gathering fruit. He survived the accident several years, but his constitution was shattered. He was called to pass through deep and lingering affliction, which he bore with exemplary fortitude. The closing scene was bright and happy, as his life had been, and brought glory to that God in whom he had trusted.

Among the members of the early Church here were found many others who sustained through life, and in death, the full assurance of Faith.



CHAPTER VIII.



SOUTHMOLTON AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

“The riches of His grace
In fellowship are given
To Sion’s chosen race,
The citizens of heaven :
He fills them with the choicest store
He gives them life for evermore.”—WESLEY.

THERE is no record of the operations of Methodism in Southmolton in the last century ; there can be no doubt, however, that the preachers who visited Northmolton, which is only about two-and-a-half miles distant, embraced opportunities of preaching in the open-air, if there was no cottage service. Regular preaching was introduced into the town in 1807 ; and the services were at first held in a house at the corner of Northmolton street ; but a gentleman afterwards gave the Methodists an old barn which was fitted up for the purpose of public worship. It was situated opposite Mr. Rossiter’s house in East-street, and, from its situation, became known as the Rookery Chapel. The immediate cause of the introduction of Methodism at this juncture was a disagreement among the members of the Congregational body, which induced Mr. Samuel Dunn, Mr. Tipper (Deacon of the Church), and Mr. Thorne, to invite the Methodists to the town.

The Congregational Church was founded in 1662,

on the passing of the Act of Uniformity and the ejection of the nonconforming Ministers from the Church. One of these, the Rev. John Flavel, author of "Husbandry Spiritualized," retired to Hudscott Hall, near this town, where, under the protection of the Rolle family, he sought to evade the malignity of his persecutors and privately to minister to his former flock. The nonconforming congregation at Southmolton assumed at first the Presbyterian form of government; and it is said that the Fortescue family, who sympathized with the ejected, were accustomed to worship in the Presbyterian Chapel. Whether the Ministers here were influenced by that doctrinal degeneracy which marked other Presbyterian Churches does not appear; but the congregation seems to have been swayed by the peculiar views of the presiding pastor, as we find that in the year 1737, an address was sent by them to the Baptist Association, signed by thirty-two members, and in 1739 the Independent form of government was assumed.

About the year 1807, also, a Mr. Taprell, a preacher of an evangelical stamp, ministered to the Independent congregation, and afterwards laboured in Barnstaple and Braunton, occasionally preaching for the Methodists at Brayford, but at the time of the secession there was no resident Minister.

The bulk of those who had seceded from the Independent Church did not long remain in connection with the Methodists. In 1811, Mr. Moody, to whose ministry we have referred elsewhere, preached a sermon defining the distinctive points in Wesleyan theology, from the words of St. Peter—"God is no respecter of persons." This exposition of the doctrines of free salvation and universal redemption led many to give up their connection with the infant Church. The first

class list of the new Society is still in existence, and contains the following names:—William Nutt, Leader; James Tipper, Sen., Ann Shaddick, William Lyddon, James Lyddon, Thomas Yendell, Joshua Beer, Elizabeth Tipper, John Bennett, Mary Tidball, Sarah Widgery, William Thorne, John Lyddon, Joanna Nutt, Hannah Badcock, and James Tipper, Jun. Of these, five belonged to one family. Joshua Beer is spoken of as a very devoted man, and prayer-meetings were held in his house near the Prison, in East-street. Mr. Nutt, the Leader of the little class, was not one of the seceders, but was induced by his father-in-law, Mr. Tipper, to attend the preaching, when he heartily embraced the expansive charity of Methodist principles.

The travelling preachers of this extensive Circuit could only visit the town twice a quarter, and when the services of no local-preacher could be obtained, one of the members used to read a chapter and explain it. In this way Mr. William Nutt began to preach, his first text being Isaiah i. 18—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." The novelty of a lay preacher in these days gave Mr. Nutt considerable notoriety; and the people, confounding the two systems so utterly antagonistic as Methodism and Romanism, used to shout after him in the street, "There goes Pope Nutt, who pardons sins for a penny a week."

Mr. Nutt witnessed a good confession for many years. He had the happiness of seeing all his children converted to God before he was suddenly summoned to his everlasting rest in the year 1843. One of his sons, Mr. Joshua Nutt, became a Local-preacher and lived in the experience of the blessing of entire sanctification. His memoir appears in the June number of the "Methodist Magazine," for 1867. The Rev. John Harris,

who recently laboured in Southmolton, is also a descendant of Mr. Nutt.

The Messrs. Lyddon were brothers, and belonged to an old Methodist family in Somersetshire. By a singular coincidence both their father and one of their brothers died suddenly, while engaged in pious service—the former whilst meeting his class, and the latter whilst returning from preaching in a country village. Mr. William Lyddon was the father of the members of the family now residing at Twitchen and Southmolton, who maintain, in the third generation, their attachment to Methodism.

Mr. William Lyddon lived at this time in the service of Mr. Lewis Dascombe, of Galliford Farm, Bishopsnympton, who had joined the Society. He formerly lived at Pulham, near Northmolton, where his father before him had been accustomed to receive the preachers. On his removal to Bishopsnympton he cordially welcomed to his house these messengers of the Cross on their periodical visits to the neighbourhood. Before this the expenses incurred by the Minister were supplied from the Society funds. The area under the pastoral charge of the travelling preachers was so extensive that the attention they could give to each place under their charge was necessarily limited; the labours of the Local-preachers, therefore, became an important auxiliary to the work, and their self-denying toil was highly valued in those days. Among those who were accustomed to visit Southmolton about this time were Mr. George Beer, of Brayford, who is still living at a good old age in Prince Edward's Island; and Messrs. Avery and Packer, of Barnstaple. To these, the name of Thomas Willmetts, of Southmolton, was afterwards added. He was at first a persecutor of the young

church, and on one occasion went, with threats of vengeance on the new sect, to hear Mr. Haime preach; but under his heart-searching appeal, was deeply convinced of sin, and became a zealous and devoted servant of Christ, labouring acceptably as a Local-preacher for many years.

Among the early preachers at Southmolton besides Messrs. Lyddon and Nutt, to whom reference has been made, are found also the names of John Badcock and James M. Coles. Mr. Badcock was a man of shrewd sense, and a good preacher, and would give utterance to solemn and startling statements respecting the truths of God. He, with other preachers of that time, used to walk eight miles to fill an appointment at Chulmleigh; and when through infirmity he found difficulty in travelling, he was accustomed to ascend the steep hill backwards to relieve the strain on his physical frame.

The Methodists of Southmolton had much opposition to contend with, but persecution only added to the keenness of their appetites for spiritual food, and the little flock greatly multiplied. They sometimes sought, but were somewhat grudgingly accorded, the protection of the law. In the month of May, 1810, during public worship on the Sabbath-day some one broke in the windows of the chapel, and disturbed the congregation. On the following day the case was brought before the magistrates, when Mr. Venn, the Mayor for the time being, who viewed the new sect with anything but favour, informed the complainants that there was no law for the Methodists. His attention was called to the law bearing on the subject, and the old gentleman turned over the folios of the Act referred to. On finding the clause relating to such offences, he justified his ignorance of the law by remarking that "the leaves of

the book had not been cut at that place." With this new light upon the point, the magistrate inflicted the penalty incurred.

An instance of the marvellous influence which may be exerted by the faithful and consistent life of an individual Christian, occurred in this neighbourhood at this time. While Messrs. Moody and Hayman were in the Circuit, a young woman was brought under religious influence. She had long been an anxious inquirer after the way of salvation, and on one occasion, while looking over the wallet of a travelling book-hawker, the man perceived from her questions that she was seeking the Truth, and remarked to her that the doctrines preached in a neighbouring cottage came the nearest to his views of the gospel of Christ. She attended one of the services, and the Word came with power to her heart. The name of the young person was Sarah Laramy. She gave her heart fully to God, and, although only sixteen years of age, became a centre of influence to a large and interesting family then residing at Kingsland Farm, near Southmolton. At first she bitterly experienced the truth,—“A man’s foes shall be they of his own household ”

Standing one Monday morning at her usual work in the farm-house, her eyes streaming with tears, the subject of conversation was “Sarah’s attending the Methodist meeting yesterday.” Her two brothers, who drove a stage van between Barnstaple and Exeter, had been narrating with bitter indignation, mingled with sarcasm, all the reports which they had collected on the road, concerning the people “everywhere spoken against.” She meekly attempted an apology to her father, but he roughly replied that he knew what these Methodists were before she was born, that they were a

set of hypocrites and deceivers,—the false prophets spoken of in the Bible. And then their landlord was a clergyman who would be sure to give them notice to quit the farm. A sore trial for one so young! But she was marvellously supported, and her trust was in Him who had said—"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." At length the rent day came, a day of anxiety to the persecuted one. With the worst apprehensions the father rode away, but on his return, to her joy Sarah found that not a word had been said about the farm, and she bowed before the Lord in deepest adoration, acknowledging, "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

After a time, Sarah's Christian deportment began to exert an influence upon the various members of her family. The prejudice which had been excited against her gradually disappeared. First one of her brothers, and then another, attended the religious services at the meeting-house; and soon the father and mother were brought to God, and the name of every member of the family had a place on the Methodist class-book. During their residence at Kingsland, and on their subsequent removal to Leary Farm, near Swymbridge, Mr. and Mrs. Laramy hospitably entertained the Ministers on their periodical visits, and to that family North Devon is unspeakably indebted for the existence and support of Methodism.

Whilst at home with her parents, and afterwards in association with her husband, Mr. William Huxtable, who succeeded to the farm at Leary (a truly estimable and Christian man), the daughter maintained a hearty attachment to the Church through whose instrumentality the light of the gospel first broke upon her mind. In

1817, the year of her marriage, the name of Sarah Huxtable appears as the Leader of a class numbering thirty members. It was a delightful society at Leary—

“Meek, simple followers of the Lamb,
They all were of one heart and soul,
And only love inspired the whole;”

But like the early flower which flourishes in virgin whiteness beneath inclement skies, it was “nursed amid whirling storms, and cradled in the winds.”

The clergyman of the parish was bitterly opposed to the Methodists, and annoyed and persecuted them in every possible way. Mr. James Courtice, who, with his wife, was a member of the Society, was specially marked out as a victim. By his marriage Mr. Courtice came into the possession of a small freehold property, and no sooner had he entered upon it than the clergyman raised his tithe-charge to an exorbitant amount. The young farmer sought an interview, and expostulated with him; but he met with a rough reception, the parson refusing to relax his demand. Owing to the arbitrary character of the law then in force, the agriculturists were completely at the mercy of the clergy, who, by availing themselves of the extraordinary power with which they were vested of demanding tithe in kind, could subject them to continual annoyances; and the “ringleader of the Methodists,” as the clergyman styled him, was thus obliged to submit to an act of gross injustice. Some years after this a little boy, a member of the same family, was excluded from the parish school at Chittlehampton, at the instance of the same clergyman; but he did not suffer from his ungenerous expulsion. He is still alive, and, possessed of a richly-stored mind, is eminently useful in his generation, and a credit to the religious community with which he is identified.

Mr. and Mrs. Huxtable afterwards removed to the adjoining parish of West Buckland, where the arbitrary demands of the clergyman very much crippled them in their business. He was a man of low morals, and manifested violent opposition when a small chapel was erected in the village. A plot of land was given by the lord of the manor for the purpose; but the clergyman asserted that the chapel lay in the church path, and would persist in passing through the window of the building. Subsequently two men and a boy in his employ were convicted of throwing a stone into the chapel while the congregation were assembled. The preacher was standing in the pulpit, and the congregation were engaged in singing, when a stone was thrown through the window with such violence as to break in the hat which hung behind the preacher, and, in passing, to cut a lock of hair from his head. Had he not moved his body towards the choir just at the instant, the blow might have proved fatal. On their conviction before the late Earl Fortescue (then Lord Ebrington), his lordship severely reprimanded the parties, and expressed his deep regret and humiliation at such an outrage having been perpetrated in the neighbourhood in which he resided. In spite of this opposition, however, the Methodist cause was vigorously sustained, and a Sunday School for the villagers' children successfully carried on.

On their subsequent removal to Combmartin, Mr. and Mrs. Huxtable succeeded in establishing a Methodist cause in that large village. They fitted up a convenient chapel on their own premises, which they conveyed in perpetuity to the Methodist Connexion. Mrs. H. is still living, and though advanced in years, retains the ardour of her first love.

CHAPTER IX.



HATHERLEIGH.

“Needy poor
And dying men, like music, heard his feet
Approach their beds; and guilty wretches took
New hope, and in his prayers wept and smiled,
And blessed him, as they died forgiven.”—POLLOCK.

IN 1810, the infant Church at Barnstaple was further strengthened by the addition to its numbers of Mr. Arthur Packer, who, in that year, came to reside in Barnstaple. Mr. Packer was a native of Winkleigh, and spent his earlier years on his father's farm in that parish. Being naturally of a studious disposition, his parents placed him, together with his younger brother, at the Tiverton Grammar School; and at sixteen years of age he commenced a school in his native parish. In 1810, whilst on a visit to his sister Mrs. Stevens, at Roborough, he was led to embrace an opening which presented itself at Barnstaple, for establishing a school. Mrs. Stevens was a pious woman, her mind having been awakened to an interest in religious subjects during her childhood, by listening to the conversation of a seamstress who worked at her home, and who had sat under the ministry of Dr. Hawker, of Plymouth, a clergyman of the Church of England, well-known as the author of “Morning and Night Watches.” The devotional habits of his elder sister led young Arthur,

also, to serious reflection. He committed a prayer to memory, and while wandering through the fields, and lifting his heart to God, he received a conscious assurance that his requests were answered. When he was seventeen years of age he was confirmed and afterwards received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in accordance with the usage of the Church ; but although he had long been struggling with sin and earnestly seeking pardoning mercy, he had not yet obtained a sense of peace with God. On his way home, however, whilst dwelling on those words of the Sacramental Service—"O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us," he received a clear sense of forgiveness. There was no gospel preaching in the neighbourhood, and a sermon was only delivered once a fortnight in Winkleigh Church. What he could not find at home he sought elsewhere, and was accustomed to walk every Sunday to Hatherleigh Church, a distance of seven miles, and back, over a rough moorland country, to attend the ministry of Mr. Glascott.

The Rev. Cradock Glascott was born about the year 1742. His father was an intimate friend of John and Charles Wesley, and his name appears as one of the seven who attended the third Annual Conference, at Bristol. Having taken his degree at Oxford, and received ordination as a Minister of the Church of England, Mr. Glascott was introduced to Lady Huntingdon, became one of her chaplains, and was employed by her, together with a few other eminent clergymen, as an itinerant preacher. He entered upon this work with all the zeal and devotion which marked the Methodist preachers of those times, and was eminently successful. Having laboured in this way for fourteen years, Mr. Glascott was presented, in 1782, to the

vicarage of Hatherleigh,* by Mr. James Ireland, the friend and companion of the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley. On his appointment to the parish, the old Nonconformist congregation had sunk to its lowest ebb, their Minister having imbibed the errors of the Arian school. His style of preaching was that which prevailed at this period, both in and out of the establishment. The doctrines of Christianity were scarcely hinted at, and the whole formula of public instruction amounted to little more than a system of morality. The few persons who attended the old meeting house, were the first to welcome Mr. Glascott to the parish, and again united themselves to the Church of England.

When Mr. Glascott first went to Hatherleigh, there was a great outcry against his preaching, the choir vacated their places in the church, and many of the congregation threatened to leave. Application was made to the Bishop to remove him from the parish; but Dr. Ross, who then presided over the diocese, was a man of liberal views, and took every opportunity to pay the Vicar marked attention and respect. Although Mr. Glascott's ministry was at first almost forsaken, when his influence began to be felt, the Church was too small to hold the congregations that flocked to hear him, and he was made extensively useful.

In the doctrinal controversies which took place between those who entertained Calvinistic and Arminian views, Mr. Glascott was one of a deputation that waited on Mr. Wesley, at the Conference of 1771, to protest against the Minutes of the former year. This interview,

* The Hatherleigh living was settled by Mr. Ireland on Trustees, for the purpose of continuing the appointment of an evangelical minister to the parish. The late Mr. Field was nominated by the founder; and the present Vicar, who is a worthy successor of Mr. Glascott, was presented by the Trustees.

though amicable in its first aspects, resulted in the issue of the "Checks to Calvinistic Antinomianism," from the pen of the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley, which, in turn, called forth severe rejoinders from Sir Richard Hill, the Rev. Rowland Hill, John Toplady, and others. But, notwithstanding these doctrinal differences, Mr. Glascott revered the memory of the sainted Fletcher,* and was accustomed to speak of him with much Christian affection.

Mr. Glascott died in 1831, after having served the parish for nearly fifty years. His zeal, his earnestness, and affectionate solicitude for the welfare of his parishioners, continued unabated till the last; and though in his eighty-ninth year when he died, he retained his faculties unimpaired. On the Sunday before his death, he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and addressed the communicants in a most impressive manner, resting at times during the performance of the duty. His name is remembered with lasting veneration by the inhabitants of Hatherleigh and the neighbourhood. He was the last survivor of the Methodist clergymen of

* When Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, published his last volume of "Checks to Antinomianism," the late Rev. Mr. Reader, the President of the Western College for training Independent Ministers, a zealous Calvinist, was so angry after he had read it, that he determined to go direct to Madeley, to contend with Mr. Fletcher face to face. He arrived in Madeley at an early hour of the day, and hastened to obtain the desired interview. He went to the house, and his loud knock at the door indicated his agitation. On the servant opening the door, he was informed, in answer, to his inquiry, that Mr. Fletcher was at home. She informed her master that Mr. Reader, of Taunton was at the door; and as soon as Mr. Fletcher heard the name of the visitor, he ran down from his study, and spreading out his hands to receive his visitor, exclaimed—"Come in, come in, thou blessed of the Lord! Am I so honoured as to receive a visit from so esteemed a servant of my Master? Let us have a little prayer while some refreshments are getting ready." Mr. Reader was so taken by surprise, that although he was prevailed upon to prolong his visit for three days, he was ashamed even to intimate what had been the object of his visit; and he afterwards stated that he never enjoyed three days of such profitable and spiritual intercourse in all his life.

the last century. He had outlived all his early friends,—the Hills, Benson, Coke, Fletcher, and the Wesleys. A sketch of the chief incidents of his useful life was written by Mr. George Pearce, of Hatherleigh, at the time of his decease; and an interesting article respecting him also appeared in the *Methodist Magazine* of 1831.

The result of Mr. Glascott's labours in his parish and the district round will only be fully known in the "Great Day." Its influence reached far into the north-west of the county, as well as into the north-east of Cornwall. A very short time before his death he received a letter from a young Wesleyan Missionary, just then about to sail for a foreign land, gratefully acknowledging him as the instrument of his conversion. This young man had been a casual worshipper at Hatherleigh Church, when passing through the town.*

Mr. Packer greatly profited under his faithful preaching, and the impress which his piety then received remained with him during the whole of his Christian course. When he came to Barnstaple he was strongly persuaded to attend the Parish Church as the only means of succeeding in his school; but having obtained good at the little Wesleyan Chapel, in Holland-street, and finding there an atmosphere congenial to his spiritual aspirations, he determined to cast in his lot with the Methodists. Contrary to the predictions of his friends, his attempt to establish a school was successful, and it speedily numbered 100 pupils, whilst that con-

* The Wesleys refrained from preaching in parishes where there was an Evangelical minister, unless specially invited to do so. In following out this principle, the Wesleyan Methodists have never established a cause in Hatherleigh, though there are Methodist families residing in the town. There are, however, chapels in several places around:—North Lew, distant four miles; Winkleigh, seven miles; Petrockstowe, five miles; and Okehampton, seven miles.


ducted by his contemporary, though connected with the Established Church, dwindled down to twenty scholars. Mr. Packer sustained his position as the leading school-master in the town for nearly twenty years.

Mr. John Packer carried on a classical school in connection with his brother, and was accustomed to read the prayers of the Church of England in the Wesleyan Chapel, in Boutport-street, when it was erected.

Mr. Packer retired into private life about the year 1830, and gave up his whole time to works of charity and the promotion of the general interests of the Church of Christ. This full consecration of his time and energy he has continued for upwards of forty years; and though arrived at the ripe old age of four-score-and-five years, whenever his strength will allow he is still seen daily wending his way through the lanes and alleys of the town, dispensing charity to the sick and dying, and administering to them the Word of Life. In these engagements his duty is truly his delight, and with pleasurable emotions does he refer to those scenes in which his prayers, admonitions, and counsels, have been the means of communicating light and comfort to the objects of his solicitude. The dying injunction of his brother first directed his mind into this career of usefulness. He remarked to him, after he had been brought through his brother's instruction and prayers to a knowledge of the truth—"This is my spiritual birthday; you must devote yourself to sick visiting; you have an especial qualification for this duty." Following this advice, Mr. Packer went to visit three old people. One of these was an old man who was dangerously ill, but who subsequently recovered. He was earnestly seeking salvation, and while Mr. Packer was explaining to him

how he first obtained mercy and pointing out the way to God through Christ, the old man, with a countenance beaming with delight, exclaimed, with an earnestness which betokened his sincerity—"He can save! He will save! He does save!" Just then his partner in life coming in, he said, "I would give my life so that you might enjoy what I now do!" She was slow, however, to view the Gospel in the same light as her husband; but, at a subsequent period, through the same instrumentality, she also found peace through believing. Old John May (for that was his name) with his wife afterwards retired to Mr. Roberts' almshouses, and on his admission made a special request of the benevolent founder of this charity that Mr. Packer might be allowed to hold religious services there. His reply was worthy of the generosity of his disposition—"Let him come and pray you all up to heaven;" and he even offered to build a chapel in which their friend might preach to the inmates of the almshouses. This incident served to confirm Mr. Packer in his benevolent course, and to quicken his zeal in the good work on which he had entered. Treading in the footsteps of his Divine Master, he went about doing good, "binding up the broken-hearted," and administering "comfort to such as mourn." During the ministry of the Rev. John Smith, in 1831, he received a large enriching of grace and a baptism of the Holy Ghost, such as he had never before realised. Christ became enthroned in his heart, and His Kingdom established in abiding peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In one of his preaching appointments at Brayford, he especially realised the presence of God. Having received this fresh anointing from on high, he proposed to devote himself wholly to the work of the ministry as a lay preacher, and he regretted, in after

years, he had not acted upon his resolution. From that time, however, he became more especially useful, and officiated as a preacher and a Class-Leader ; but his time and talents were chiefly devoted to visiting the sick.



CHAPTER X.



FORMATION OF THE BARNSTAPLE CIRCUIT. EXTENSIVE CHAPEL ERECTIONS.

" These temples of His grace
How beautiful they stand,
The honours of our native place
And bulwarks of our land.
In Sion God is known,
A refuge in distress ;
How bright has His salvation shone
Through all her palaces ! "

WATTS.

AT the Conference of 1811 Bideford ceased to be regarded as a mission station, and the whole of the district was formed into a regular Circuit, with Barnstaple at its head, to which three Ministers were appointed. Four years had now elapsed since its separation from Collumpton and Exeter, and during that period the number of church members had increased from less than a hundred to 337.

This large Circuit extended from Hartland, in the north-west, to Morchard, in the south-east. The first Superintendent Minister appointed to it was Rev. John Simpson. He entered on the work of the Christian ministry in 1790, and continued in active service for forty years. " He was a man of sound understanding, and acceptable ministerial gifts, and maintained through life an unblemished reputation. He was a diligent

pastor, and greatly beloved by the people among whom he lived."

Mr. Simpson's two colleagues were the Revs. Solomon Whitworth and John Slater. The former was a devoted man, and Mr. Slater gave promise of that eminence which he afterwards attained as a preacher, the earnestness of his manner evincing the deep anxiety he felt for the spiritual welfare of his hearers.

These exemplary Ministers were indeed "in journeyings oft, and in labours more abundant," preaching not unfrequently on every night in the week, and sometimes four times on the Sabbath. They introduced week-night preaching into several of the villages adjacent to the towns of Barnstaple, Bideford, and Southmolton; and during Mr. Simpson's two years' residence in Barnstaple he also set on foot and established Sabbath-schools on the Lancasterian system in the three towns named. He was also the honoured instrument of promoting the establishment of an auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Barnstaple, and inciting the ministers of other denominations to unite in the noble enterprise. The assiduity and conscientiousness with which Mr. Simpson discharged his ministerial duties is marked in the various records of the work of God in the extensive Circuit under his charge. Not only has he left a carefully-prepared register of the 413 members under his care, but also a memoir of each of those who died in the Lord during his residence at Barnstaple. Among these are the following "Simple Annals of the Poor:"—

"Martha Dunscombe died on the 16th of April, 1812, at Bishopsnympton, and was buried in the parish churchyard on the 19th of the same month. She was

about three years in society with the Methodists at the place where she died, and appeared to have had a Christian experience, generally speaking, of her state being acceptable in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. . . . She conducted herself with great propriety in the family in which she lived for five years, and Mr. Dascombe, her master, says that she generally had the government of her temper. She had some gracious manifestations of the Divine favour when approaching near to eternity, so that at one time she sent or called for her master to come and rejoice with her. She died in peace about the age of 37."

"In the year 1813, died Mary Toit, of Bideford, an old woman who had a comfortable sense of God's favour to her for many years. Though she was long deprived of the faculty of hearing, long confined to her bed, and for some time deprived of sight, she retained an unshaken confidence in God, and to the last could rejoice in Him as her portion. There is no reason to doubt of her now being happy in God in whom she confided and rejoiced while on earth.—Signed, JOHN SIMPSON."

At the termination of Mr. Simpson's ministry in the Circuit, the number of Church members had increased to 413, which was composed as follows:—

Bideford, 33; *Alwington*, 16; *Appledore*, 14; *Buckland Brewer*, 16; *Clovelly*, 13; *Hartland*, 11; *Torrington*, 18; *Wear Gifford*, 7; *Woolfardisworthy*, 11.

Barnstaple, 35; *Fremington*, 9; *Georgeham*, 9; *Innstow*, 16; *Loxhore*, 2; *Landkey*, 21; *Swymbridge*, 8; *Beckett*, 4.

Southmolton, 45; *Northmolton*, 20; *Brayford*, 33; *Bishopsnympton*, 7; *Leary*, 14; *Twitchen*, 4.

Chulmleigh, 17; *Chawleigh*, 9; *Lapford*, 10; *Morchard*, 6; *Witheridge*, 5.

Previous to the year 1813 North Devon had been included in the Plymouth District, but at the Conference of that year the EXETER DISTRICT was formed, which comprised the Circuit towns of Exeter, Taunton, South Petherton, Axminster, Barnstaple, Dunster, Okehampton, Ashburton, and Brixham; with William Horner as the first Chairman.

The following is a list of the ministerial appointments to the Barnstaple Circuit, with the number of members at the commencement of each year, from 1813 to 1816:—

1813.—Robert James, James Thomas, and John Wevill.—No. of members, 413.

1814.—Henry Trick, William Slinger, and John Wevill.—No. of members, 409.

1815.—William Worth, John Harris, and Henry Olver.—No. of members, 409.

1816.—William Sleigh, John Harris, and Henry Olver.*—No. of members, 492.

Mr. Worth was a native of Tiverton, and was descended from a Wesleyan family, his grandfather having joined the Society there in 1754. He entered upon the regular work of the ministry in 1805, and continued in active service for forty-eight years. He died in 1861, and the joyous experience of his death-bed formed a fitting conclusion to his happy and useful life. His ministry was characterized by fervent zeal and the earnest proclamation of that Truth which he had himself personally realized. During his ministry at Barnstaple ninety members were added to the Church, and the

* Mr. Olver is still living; his son, Rev. G. W. Olver, B.A., is Secretary to the Westminster Training College.

congregations of the various new chapels were largely increased. Mr. Worth published a small volume containing a short biography of his wife (who died soon after her marriage,) and also some poems written by her in early life. The following impressive lines, which occur in her memoir, are descriptive of her Christian experience:—

“I thought upon my former sins,
And like one frightened stood;
Till with a smile He said, “My child!”
And then I said, “My God.”
Through Faith’s brest lattice I espied,
With glimmering light, the Lamb!
I would have sung; but sacred joy
My happy soul o’ercame.”

Mr. Sleigh, who succeeded Mr. Worth in 1816, was also a good preacher, and an estimable man. During his residence in Barnstaple he published a work entitled, “Practical Dictionary, containing Synopses of Subjects, Divine, Moral, and Literary.” This Dictionary embraced nearly six hundred subjects, and consisted of comprehensive outlines, arranged alphabetically. It was a work of great value to the student, and was calculated to assist the devotional exercises of the private Christian. Some copies of it are still to be found in this neighbourhood, and a new edition, improved and enlarged, has since been published. A volume of poems by Mrs. Sleigh was also published at Barnstaple, and contained many pieces of considerable merit. Among them are several referring to local incidents. The following extract from a poem entitled, “Reflections on the Sabbath Morning,” will give an idea of Mrs. Sleigh’s poetic powers:—

“Hail, hallowed day! how welcome thy return!
All breathes an air of sanctity! of heavenly peace
And joy: while kindling with diviner fire,

The soul, immortal, breathing to the skies,
Pants to obtain her seat among the blest,
And find a Sabbath that will never end."

The piece "Farewell to Barum," written on the occasion of their leaving the Circuit, commences with the following strain:—

"Barum farewell! A long farewell to thee!
Long—for perhaps I never more may see
Thee, nor thy verdant banks, nor silver stream.
Thy fertile meads, thy woods of deepest green,
No more may glad my sight!
No more impart delight!
But O! when recollection brings to view,
Friends whom I lov'd, and lov'd because I knew
Their worth intrinsic—gen'rous and sincere,
Affectionate and kind,—I feel the tear,
The tear of grateful love, o'erflow my eyes!
No worthless proof how much my friends I prize."

In the year 1815, Mr. Harris, the colleague of Mr. Worth, died in the thirty-seventh year of his age, and the seventh of his ministry; and a tablet to his memory now stands in the chapel at Bideford. He was a man of sterling piety. He served the Lord with all perseverance and fidelity, and his end was eminently peaceful.

At the close of Mr. Sleight's ministry in the Barnstaple Circuit, the number of members in the various societies was 491, which was composed as follows:—

Bideford, 51; *Alwington*, 18; *Buckland Brewer*, 15; *Tithecott*, 7; *Clovelly*, 11; *Hartland*, 40; *Torrington*, 18; *Wear Gifford*, 12; *Woolfardisworthy*, 25.

Barnstaple, 50; *Fremington*, 10; *Instow*, 11; *Landkey*, 18; *Swymbridge*, 7; *Loxhore*, 5; *Beckett*, 4.

Southmolton, 61; *Northmolton*, 22; *Brayford*, 24; *Leary*, 13.

Chulmleigh, 15; *Morchard*, 18; *Winkleigh*, 15; *Witheridge*, 4; *Burrington*, 11.

The preaching-room at Barnstaple having become too contracted for the increasing congregation, by the self-denying efforts of a few of the leading members of the Society a very neat and commodious chapel was erected in Boutport-street, on the site occupied by the present building. It was opened in the Spring of 1814, when sermons were preached by the Rev. Josiah Hill, then residing in Wales, and the large congregations which assembled on the occasion, indicated the growing interest felt in the cause. The building contained about 400 sittings, and it was erected at a cost of £1,500,—an amount which very heavily taxed the resources of the church and congregation. The original front was retained when the chapel was enlarged in 1834, but the whole has now been superseded by a new and elegant structure.

In 1815, a building of a very unpretending description was erected at Torrington. In the previous year, Mr. Samuel Pearce had joined the Society in that place, and manifested a deep interest in the infant cause. Mr. Pearce is still living, and from that time to the present has been actively employed in the service of his Divine Master, and, in a green old age, is honoured and respected by all who know him.

Up to this time, the Methodists held their services in a long room fitted up for the purpose, and the responsibility of sustaining the cause devolved on a Local-preacher who had come from London to reside in the town. Rumours to his discredit having been circulated they were communicated to him by Mr. Worth, the Superintendent Minister of the Circuit. He took such umbrage at this apparent want of sympathy with him, that he invited the co-operation of the Baptists, who had just previously visited the town,

and transferred the outgrowth of so many years' labour and anxiety,—including preaching-room, congregation, and many of the members,—to that body. A tradesman of the town offered to build a small place of worship on advantageous and easy terms; and, in order to afford security to the person who advanced the money, the young men deposited their watches, and the women their gold rings and trinkets, with him, and deputed two of their number to go into Cornwall to solicit aid. By this means they realised a sufficient sum to complete the internal fittings of the chapel; but the proverb to the effect that "Misfortunes never come singly, but in whole battalions," was never more literally verified than in this place. The chapel had not long been completed, when it was broken into by some malicious persons, who destroyed the seating and the pulpit, and trod the Bible under their feet; but although this wanton act of mischief was perpetrated at the dead of night, two members of the congregation happened providentially to be passing at the time, and detected them *in flagrante delicto*. The invaders of the sanctity of the House of God were so ashamed of their act that they spontaneously replaced the furniture they had destroyed, and no further notice was taken of it.

In the year 1816, a commodious chapel was erected in Bideford. So greatly had the church prospered since the introduction of Methodism into this neighbourhood, that it was deemed expedient to erect a building that would seat between 500 and 600 persons, at a cost of about £1,600. This was a great undertaking considering the comparative poverty of the Wesleyan body in the town at that time, and in many respects, looking at it from a worldly point of view, it was considered to be an unwise and injudicious step; but by

faith they entered upon the work, believing that God had called them to it; and this faith was ultimately honoured and crowned with great success. The chapel was dedicated to Divine worship on Wednesday, March 16th, 1816. The Rev. Dr. Dermott preached in the morning and evening, and the Rev. William Worth, one of the Circuit Ministers, in the afternoon. The chapel was well filled on each occasion, and great interest was felt in the success of the new undertaking. By the erection of this chapel a fresh impulse was given to Methodism in the town and neighbourhood: the small Society grew and multiplied, new preaching places were established in many of the country villages around, and Parkham, Alwington, Littleham, and Appledore soon formed regular preaching places. In connection with the new Chapel, a Sabbath School was also established which speedily numbered from 90 to 100 children, and converts through the agency of the Methodist ministry were multiplied.

In the same year, chapels were built at Landkey and Swymbridge. The former was opened for worship in October, by the Rev. James Jones, of Tiverton. It was superseded, in 1869, by a neat Gothic building. By its side stands a commodious schoolroom, which was erected about ten years since. The exterior of the Swymbridge Chapel remains in nearly its original form, but a slight improvement has been made in the front of the building. This, together with the modern re-fitting of the interior, was effected during the superintendency of the Rev. John Harding. The members of these village churches have ever maintained that fervour and simplicity which marked the early Methodists, and the numbers of young persons who have been converted to God under these religious in-

fluences, have largely swelled the ranks of the Christian church.

In 1815, a small chapel was opened at Fremington, on which occasion the Rev. William Hayman, who was then stationed at Haverfordwest, visited the scene of his early labours to preach the sermons. Services had previously been conducted in the house of Humphrey Davey, near the site of this humble sanctuary. His cottage, thus devoted to God's service, was the scene of the conversion, among others, of John Lock, who is now living in Barnstaple, and has attained the venerable age of eighty-four years, for sixty of which he has been a consistent member of the Methodist Society. Of late he has lost his sight, but he is still able to find his way unaided to the House of God. His old age is marked by a ripened experience and an intelligent piety, which cannot fail to excite the interest of every true Christian. The old building was occupied as a place of worship for many years, and was superseded by a very neat chapel, erected during the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Leach, on a site presented by the lord of the manor, Dr. Yeo, of Fremington House.

In the early days of Methodism, Mr. Lile, a farmer from Lincolnshire, who lived at Instow was the means of gathering a small church in the neighbourhood but he died from the effect of a kick from his horse in 1813. For many years, Mr. Verney heartily sustained the infant cause, and, on his removal to Westdown, was succeeded by Mr. Dullam, of Lower Yelland. Under his fostering care and that of his family, and the excellent influence of the Sabbath School, much good has been effected in the parish.

About this date chapels were also built in the western part of the Circuit between Bidford and

Stratton. The first erected was at Woodford, and another was soon afterwards built at Woolley. In connection with the latter place, Mr. Thomas Jewell, one of a large family who had unitedly devoted themselves to the service of God, commenced the first Sunday School in the neighbourhood. He afterwards entered the Wesleyan Ministry, and laboured with great success. By these means, and the general leavening influence of piety in that neighbourhood, a great moral change was effected. Drunkenness, revelling, wrestling, and fighting gradually decreased, and the influence of religion began generally to be felt. Among those who were engaged in the good work was Mrs. Johanna Brookes, whose extraordinary career is narrated in a little work describing the scenes of her useful life.

In 1816, a chapel was erected at Sticklepath, near Okehampton, (honoured as being the first place to which the Wesleys were welcomed in North Devon,) chiefly through the exertions of Mr. Searle, a Local-preacher in the Launceston Circuit.

As early as 1798, Mr. Trampleasure, a Home-missionary, was employed in the neighbourhood of Okehampton, and was made the instrument of much good. Before entering the regular ministry he was engaged by the Launceston Circuit to preach in the extensive rural district lying between that place and Bideford. In the prosecution of his work he had to submit to much opposition and ill-treatment. In the parish of Bridgerule, he was forcibly enlisted as a soldier, but, like John Nelson, he refused to fight, and obtained his discharge by the kindness of a Quaker gentleman who paid the required fine. On one occasion, while preaching at Bideford, he was thrown over the Quay into the river; and at another time received similar, and even

rougher, treatment from a mob at Okehampton. Among those who embraced the Truth through his instrumentality was Mrs. Mallett, a woman of great energy and zeal, who became a prominent member of the Church at Sticklepath, and subsequently at Okehampton. In 1813, a young man named Paul Orchard, entered the itinerant work from this place. His son, the Rev. Paul Orchard, is still actively engaged in the Wesleyan ministry. Mr. Croscombe, who is mentioned elsewhere in connection with the Society at Bideford, also came from this neighbourhood.

Mr. Searle became a resident at Sticklepath in 1810. He at first opened his house for the preaching of the gospel, and subsequently succeeded in erecting a chapel which was consecrated to Divine worship, in the summer of 1816, by the Rev. James Jones, Superintendent of the Tavistock Circuit.

The village of Sticklepath contains about fifty families, and lies on the borders of the parishes of Belstone* and Sampford-Courtenay. On the outskirts of the latter parish is an episcopal chapel, the remains of what was in former times a Chantry. This chapel, which is five miles from the Parish Church, is a very old building, probably of Saxon origin. Services were formerly held only twice in the year, viz., at Easter and Michaelmas, when the clergyman received his dues from certain estates, on which occasions the Minister and his clerk came in state to the village with their books and other church furniture. Since the restoration of the old building, however, a service has been held once every Sunday, and by an arrangement made with the Rector, the Church of England and Wesleyan

* The seat of ancient Druidical worship, referred to in the first chapter of this book.

services do not interfere the one with the other, being held alternately in the morning and afternoon. The late Rector was a man of thoroughly liberal views, and his worthy successor belongs to the same school. Under the fostering care of the Pearse family and others, the cause has been sustained, with great spiritual advantage to the village and neighbourhood, and the chapel there, with its recent improvements, and the commodious schoolrooms attached, are highly creditable to the spirit and liberality of the congregation. When the chapel was first erected, Sticklepath was at the head of what is now the Okehampton Circuit, and continued so for some years. Besides the services held in the village, there is preaching at South Zeal, one mile east; at Belstone (where there is a chapel), one mile and-a-half west; and at Halford, two miles and a-half north.

The only remains of the Quakers referred to in the fourth chapter, is their burying-place which is still used by the villagers.* In it was erected, about twenty years since a memorial-stone in commemoration of their hospitality to the Wesleys, of which we have given an exact transcript.

At the Conference of 1826, Mr. Trampleasure was appointed to the Sticklepath Circuit, and during his residence here his attention was specially directed to

PHIL. IV. 9.
*"Whose names are in
 the Book of Life."*


IN THIS CONSECRATED
 GROUND
 ARE INTERRED THE BODIES
 OF THE PIOUS
QUAKERS,
 LATE RESIDENTS IN THIS
 VILLAGE, WHO,
 IN THE YEAR 1743, AND
 AFTER, WELCOMED
 AND ENTERTAINED THE
 WESLEYS, J. NELSON,
 AND OTHERS,
 AS THEY JOURNEYED TO
 PREACH THE GOSPEL.

*"Be not forgetful to enter-
 tain strangers."—Heb. xiii. 2.*

* There is also a small Quaker burying-ground in the village of Newton Tracey, near Barnstaple.

Okehampton. Towards the close of his ministry, in the year 1828, a young tradesman named Philip Brook was brought under religious concern. Being in ill-health, he disposed of his business and removed to Exeter, in order that he might obtain medical advice. He died shortly afterwards, and left £150 in his will towards the cost of erecting a chapel. A shell of an unfinished house was hired at a yearly rental, and fitted up with pulpit and seats. In this place the worship was continued for thirteen years, until the opening of the present commodious chapel, in May, 1842. The inaugural services were conducted by the Rev. J. Wood, and the Rev. B. Carvosso. The total cost of the building, including the schoolroom, was about £800.

It is probable that Okehampton will ever remain a missionary Circuit, the population being sparse, and extending over a distance of nearly twenty-four miles along the northern side of Dartmoor. Besides the erections at Okehampton and Sticklepath, there are chapels at Moretonhampstead, Chagford, Broadley, Northlew, Folley, Winkleigh, Southcott, Belstone, and Bridestowe. Services are also held at South Zeal, Hewton, Halford, and Maldon. In these fifteen places there is accommodation for nearly 2,500 persons, and most of the chapels are well attended.



CHAPTER XI.



THE CONNEXIONAL CHANGES OF 1815, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON NORTH DEVON.

“And in the temples of the Holy One
Messiah’s messengers, the faithful few,
The Bible opened, and reasoned awfully
Of temperance, righteousness, and judgment soon
To come, of ever-during life and death.”—POLLOCK.

THE general stimulus which was given to chapel-building at this time was but the expression of the religious feeling which had been awakened throughout the North of Devon. The results of the labours of the early preachers, and the energetic missionary efforts of the previous ten years, were being felt, not only in the towns, but in a rural district which had hitherto been remarkably impervious to religious impressions; but the sudden removal of Dr. Coke, by death, on his voyage to India in the year 1815, produced a great change in missionary operations; and the retrenchment which became necessary gave a serious check to the advancing interests of the cause in North Devon.

At the Conference of 1815 steps were taken to form a distinct fund for the support of the work abroad, which resulted in the establishment of the “General Wesleyan Missionary Society.” It was at this time determined to allow the terms “Home Missions” and

“Home Missionaries” to fall into disuse, and either to make the existing stations separate Circuits, or to attach them to existing Circuits. For the purpose of enabling the Conference to afford the necessary aid for the extension of the Gospel in isolated parts of the country, in connection with existing Circuit arrangements, it was determined to establish a new collection, to be made in all the chapels in the month of July. This, added to what was styled the Yearly Collection, previously made amongst the members of the classes, formed the Contingent Fund, which was divided yearly amongst the Circuits needing aid. Each Circuit was now regarded as a Missionary centre, and thrown upon its own resources, with the power to make a claim for any deficiencies upon the general fund. These changes had a most depressing effect upon the efforts of those who had so nobly devoted themselves to the work in North Devon. The cause was now becoming firmly established. By dint of great effort and self-denial chapels had been built in the towns, and many of the villages, and the way had been opened for still greater advances; but instead of receiving the assistance needed to occupy this extended field of labour, the staff of Ministers in this large Circuit was reduced from three to two. This, together with the distress which pervaded the country, and especially the agricultural districts, consequent on the General Peace, resulted in the abandonment of many of the stations where preaching had been established. Among these were Bickington, Goodleigh, Tawstock, and Marwood, where services had been regularly held and Sunday Schools commenced. The labours of the itinerant and Local-preachers were more urgently required in the distant villages where societies had been formed, and

influential persons raised up, without whose pecuniary aid the claims upon the Circuit could not have been met. Other denominations, however, readily and zealously entered upon these spheres of usefulness. Wear Gifford and Georgeham also ceased to appear in the list of preaching places; and one by one the stations lying in the valley of the Taw, between Barnstaple and Crediton, on which so much labour had been expended, were abandoned; until the number had dwindled down from 32, in 1813, to 22, in 1820. Among these may be named Lapford, Chawleigh, Morehard, and Burrington, and afterwards Chulmleigh. The chapel now occupied by the Congregationalists at Lapford was at this period handed over to that body. According to the returns contained in the Minutes of Conference the number of members declined from 520 to 420, and during the succeeding ten years, although much good was accomplished, the number of members did not rise much above that average. There were also signs of awakening interest on the north-western side of the county. Besides the Wesleyan Ministers who had preached, at stated intervals, in most of the important villages lying within the angle of country bounded by Bude, Okehampton, and Hartland, and the excellent Rector of Hatherleigh, other agencies were now called into the field.

In the midst of this rural district, about equi-distant from Hatherleigh, Holsworthy, and Torrington, lies the parish of Shebbear. In the Spring of 1813 the Vicar of Shebbear, who resided in the west of Cornwall, appointed the Rev. Daniel Evans his curate. He was a converted man, and his first sermon in the Parish Church made a deep impression on many minds. He expatiated on the nature and necessity of the new birth,

and his earnest manner greatly affected his hearers. Among the parishioners was a family of the name of Thorne, who resided at Lake Farm. Mr. and Mrs. Thorne had long evinced a reverent regard for religion, and maintained the worship of God in their family. Mrs. Thorne's father, who had on his visits to Tavistock occasionally attended the services of the Methodists, was accustomed to speak to his daughter of the lucid manner in which they preached the Gospel, and the plainness with which they set forth the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ. Mr. Evans' thundering denunciation against sin, and searching discourses on the necessity of regeneration, awakened in Mrs. Thorne's mind deep convictions for sin, and an earnest concern for her soul's salvation; and during a visit of Mr. Glascott, of Hatherleigh, whilst listening to a sermon from Romans viii. 1,—“There is now therefore no condemnation,” &c., she was enabled “to believe with her heart unto righteousness,” and realise “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The novel character of Mr. Evans' preaching excited the opposition of some of his parishioners, which led to his being silenced in the following year by Dr. Pelham, the then Bishop of the diocese. This circumstance led the parishioners who had embraced Mr. Evans' views to seek the assistance of the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries labouring in the neighbourhood.

At this juncture, Mr. William O'Bryan having had his sympathies awakened by the destitute spiritual condition of a large number of parishes in that neighbourhood, volunteered his services to Mr. Banwell, the Missionary in the Stratton Circuit,* and entered with intense ardour on his evangelical labours.

* There were at this time in Devonshire and the east of Cornwall (including

Mr. O'Bryan was a native of Luxulyan, in the eastern part of Cornwall, and was a Local-preacher of the Wesleyan body. He had offered himself as a candidate for the regular ministry, and had been declined by the Quarterly Meeting in his own Circuit, chiefly on account of his eccentricities; but he was constantly employed by the travelling preachers to assist them in their labours. Feeling persuaded that preaching was his mission, he was accustomed to journey in various directions as spheres of usefulness presented themselves, and to preach with considerable success.

Entering on the Stratton mission* at this juncture he found "the fields white already unto the harvest," and was cordially welcomed by a people who thirsted for the "Word of Life." Among the inhabitants of many of the parishes in the north-west of Devon the Gospel had been preached by the Wesleys and the early Methodists, and later by the missionaries of the Bideford and Launceston Circuits; and through their labours, in connection with the efforts of Messrs. Glascott and Evans, the leaven of Christianity had been silently working, and a general interest had been awakened in spiritual things. Mr. O'Bryan being an earnest and stirring preacher attracted great attention. His wife also entered heartily into his enterprise, and, as he possessed a robust frame, he was well calculated to meet the pressing demands for help which the Wesleyan body

Bodmin) 16 Circuits, to which 35 regular preachers were appointed, who had 7,013 members of Society under their charge; and in 1809 there were 23 preachers employed in the same area. The statements contained in the *Bible Christian Jubilee Volume*, pages 10 and 11, refer to a period much anterior to this.

* The statement contained in the *Bible Christian Jubilee Memorial*, (page 15) that the Stratton Mission was opened three years only before Mr. O'Bryan entered on this sphere is calculated to mislead. As a part of the Launceston Circuit the neighbourhood had been regularly visited (see page 87), and many of the villages which appear on the "Preachers' Plan" of the year 1808 had been visited for many years previously.

was not able at this time adequately to meet, and was the instrument of gathering large numbers into the Gospel fold. It should be remarked, however, that Mr. Banwell, the Wesleyan preacher on that station, though not possessing high repute as a preacher, must have successfully carried on the work during his three years' residence, first at Stratton and then at Holsworthy, the centres of this extensive Circuit, since the number of members under his charge increased from 214 in the year 1815, to 480 in the year 1817.

Mr. O'Bryan's feeling towards the Methodist body must have been anything but cordial after the rebuffs he had met with amongst them, and would not fail to be expressed. The people rallied round him, and he succeeded in alienating many entire Societies and congregations from the parent body, which formed the nucleus of a new Methodist community of which he became the founder and leader.*

The Thorne family of Shebbear, who had applied in vain to the Methodist preacher at Holsworthy for help, gave a cordial invitation to Mr. O'Bryan, who was now gradually separating himself, or being driven, from his old friends, to visit that parish. He responded to the call, and was the means of establishing, in connection with that family, the first Bible Christian Society, the members of its communion being generally known as the Bryanite Methodists.

* The best reason which can be assigned for the reluctance of the old body to receive Mr. O'Bryan into the regular ministry was the altered position of Methodism with reference to missionary operations. In earlier days Mr. Wesley would readily have embraced such an instrumentality, and on his own responsibility given him a suitable sphere of labour. It required men of greater experience and superior administrative talent, however, to act in such an emergency, than could be found at this time among the Ministers of a rural district; and it will be easily seen how it was that Mr. O'Bryan's influence was directed into a channel in which, perhaps, it was best employed.

The Society rapidly extended its influence throughout the extensive area lying to the north-west of Dartmoor and the east of Cornwall; and Mr. O'Bryan found able coadjutors in his work in Messrs. James, John, and Samuel Thorne, who, with their parents, having been brought under the influence of the Truth, entered zealously into the evangelistic enterprise. Mr. James Thorne became a leading Minister in the new body, and the younger brother set on foot a printing establishment in this remote rural parish, which became the nucleus of the Bible Christian Book-Room, and has been the means of disseminating a healthy literature among a large rural population.

Many of the places in which Mr. O'Bryan obtained a footing had been for many years under the culture of the Wesleyans, such as Stratton, Holsworthy, Morwenstow, Woolfardisworthy, Hartland, Parkham, Trewint, Week St. Mary, Marhamchurch, and Launcells. At Northlew he was invited to preach at the opening services of a new Methodist chapel, when he so far ingratiated himself with the trustees, that both the chapel and congregation were transferred to the new denomination. This may be regarded by some as a just retaliation for his old friends' want of cordiality towards him, but such a course can hardly be looked upon as strictly honourable. Among other places in which the whole society attached themselves to Mr. O'Bryan were Bridgerule, the residence of Mrs. Goodman, the friends of Mrs. Rottenbury, who became of note in the body; and Tithecott. Mr. O'Bryan's frugal living and limited demands suited the capacity and disposition of the people in the poorer places, and he remained in connection with the Societies he had been the instrument of forming, for about fifteen years.

In 1829, the Bible Christian Conference, having found Mr. O'Bryan as difficult to manage as had the Wesleyans before them, refused to concede to him supreme authority, and required him to take a position in a Circuit as a regular Minister; but he formally resigned his spiritual charge, and many of the Societies remained in union with him.


During the fourteen years, the Societies had increased to 7,599 members, with 62 Ministers and 22 women preachers. Female preaching was an important element in the early success of the body, and prominent among those who co-operated with Mr. O'Bryan, was Mrs. Susanna Brooks, an account of whose extraordinary conversion is contained in a little work entitled *The Handmaid of the Lord*.

She originally came from Clovelly, and attributed her religious change to no particular instrumentality; but while engaged in Divine worship in the Parish Church at Morwenstow, she rose, under an inward impulse, in the midst of the service, and publicly addressed the clergyman and congregation, afterwards continuing her address outside the church. Such a demonstration had, at least, the effect of awakening considerable interest, and arousing attention to religion. In her labours, she co-operated with the Wesleyans, and, indeed, with all of kindred Christian sympathies; but, on Mr. O'Bryan's coming into the neighbourhood, he being an advocate of female preaching, she allied herself more closely with the community with which he was identified. The employment of women as preachers gave considerable notoriety to their religious services, and its novelty could not fail to attract large gatherings of people.

The zealous but unpretending labours of these

pious people resulted in a rapid extension of their influence in a district which much needed such an evangelical agency. As the result, the bulk of the agricultural population in several important parishes, attached themselves to the Societies founded by Mr. O'Bryan, whilst, in other instances, both denominations gained a footing. From the period of their separation from the control of their founder, the Societies advanced still more rapidly, and in the year 1843, their numbers had doubled. The hearty manner in which the preachers advocated the temperance cause, exerted a powerful influence in neighbourhoods where intemperance was the crying evil, and has given an increased impetus to the progress of the body. At the Jubilee of the Bible Christian Connexion, held in 1864, the venerable James Thorne stood as the honoured representative of a race of self-denying and devoted men who, in their day, have exerted a marked influence on the population amongst which they have laboured, and under whose fostering care a church has sprung up numbering more than 25,000 members.

Various suggestions have been made during late years with a view to the union of the various bodies of Methodists, who maintain, in all their branches, an unvarying uniformity in doctrine. The most tangible proposal which has been considered, is the union of the Bible Christian body with the Methodist New Connexion, which separated from the parent body in 1792, and the idea seems to be not unfavourably entertained by both parties.



CHAPTER XII.



PROGRESS OF THE WORK—THE THIRD PERSECUTION IN TORRINGTON.

“Hence all that is in man—pride, passion, art
Powers of the mind, and feelings of the heart
Insensible of Truth’s Almighty charms,
Starts at her first approach and sounds to arms!
While bigotry, with well-dissembled fears
His eyes shut fast, his fingers in his ears
Pretends a zeal for godliness and grace,
And spits abhorrence in the Christian’s face.”

COWPER.

IN 1818, the Revs. William Baker and Titus Close were appointed to the Barnstaple Circuit, and during that year the work of God abundantly prospered; a number of young persons being added to the church, some of whom remain to this day “as pillars in the House of the Lord.” Mr. Baker is still living, at an advanced age. Mr. Close (erroneously called “Clive” in the *Life of Mrs. Johanna Brookes*, referred to in a previous chapter), was sent to Barnstaple to supply the place of Mr. Pigot, who had been compelled to retire from the work through ill-health. He is described as a Boanerges,—his pulpit addresses being characterized by great earnestness and power; and the influence of his ministry was felt throughout the entire neighbourhood.

Among those who yielded themselves to God and

His Church at this time was Mrs. Thomas King, who for fifty years maintained a consistent Christian profession. Her naturally vigorous mind and matured judgment, sanctified as they were by the Spirit of God, well qualified her for the various offices she was called to sustain in the Church. She efficiently fulfilled the duties of Class-leader and Sick Visitor, and in the latter capacity, her timely aid and Christian sympathy were cheerfully offered to the afflicted of every class. The house of Mr. and Mrs. King was for many years a hospitable home for Methodism, where a cordial welcome was always given to the "messengers of the Churches."

Mr. Close was afterwards called to the foreign work, and together with his excellent wife (formerly Miss Adams, of Morwenstow), successfully laboured in the missionary field in India. He returned to England in enfeebled health, and died in 1833, highly esteemed for his personal qualities and ministerial usefulness.

In the Minutes of Conference for the next seven years we find also the names of James Odgers, William Hill, Charles Haime, John Overton, Joseph Earnshaw, John W. Cloake, John Rogers, and John Wesley Thomas.

Mr. Odgers, though somewhat eccentric, was a racy and effective preacher. He zealously devoted himself in early life to the missionary work, and endured much persecution. He was again appointed to Bideford on the separation of that Circuit from Barnstaple, and on his retirement from the work he resided for many years at Exeter, where he died at a good old age.

As a preacher and pastor Mr. Hill exerted a very beneficial influence on the Circuit at large. He was appointed to Bideford a second time, in 1842, and both he and Mrs. Hill (formerly Miss Evans, of that place) were held in very high esteem.

The re-appointment of Mr. Haime to Barnstaple, in 1821, was gladly hailed, especially by those who were the fruit of his early ministry. A far brighter prospect now presented itself, but he remained the same stern, self-denying Elijah as in the days of yore. As a preacher, his bold and commanding imagery and striking descriptions of the sinner's danger enchained the attention of his hearers. His faithful portraiture of character, and vivid sketches of the Redeemer plucking "the brand from the burning" brought home with overwhelming effect to the minds of the thoughtless the verities of God's Word. During Mr Haime's ministry a new chapel was erected at Southmolton, at a cost of £600, and the Rev. George Gellard, a native of Northmolton, preached at the opening services.

In 1824, the chapel at Landkey was also enlarged. No place had better repaid the pastoral care bestowed upon it. The congregation received the Truth in the love thereof, and the Ministers of Christ were highly esteemed for their work's sake, whilst that affection was warmly reciprocated by these servants of God, who beheld with delight the fruits of their labours in this vineyard of the Lord. Many of the elders were now passing away, but the ranks of the Militant Church were replenished with new converts. On the night of Mrs. Gould's death, in 1821, Mr. Thomas Joce Buckingham experienced the converting power of the Gospel under a sermon preached by Mr. Haime, from the words "Quench not the Spirit," and united himself to the Society. Mrs. Buckingham, was also led to join the little band, her mind having been previously opened to receive the Truth under the ministry of a pious clergyman in Bristol. Although known and highly respected by the Church at large, her real worth could be best appreciated by those

favoured with her intimate friendship. Possessed of a naturally mild and amiable disposition, when imbued with spiritual life her character shone out with peculiar loveliness. In union with her husband, her zeal for God was especially manifested in devout and regular attendance on the ordinances of religion, and it was her highest joy to see her family "walking by the same rule and minding the same things." Having lived for many years an ornament to the Christian Church, with her light still burning she was admitted to "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The name of George Bale should not be forgotten. Mr. Bale was for thirty-three years a useful and influential member of the Society at Landkey, during twenty-five of which he was a devoted Leader and Local-preacher. He was a man of diminutive stature—under five feet in height—his growth having been checked by a fall in childhood; but in the pulpit his appearance was manly and prepossessing, and his delivery fluent and impressive. He was descended, on his mother's side, from a family of French refugees, who landed in North Devon, in 1685, at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes* by Louis XIV. Having a small competency he devoted the whole of his time to his Christian vocation. Religion was the one business of his life, and, like his Divine Master, he went about doing good. In helping and cheering on those who were actively engaged in the Church, he rendered invaluable service, and in his intercourse with the young he was rendered eminently useful. He died in 1843, in the full assurance of a blessed immortality.

The Sabbath-School at Landkey has always been

* A number of families in North Devon have descended from these refugees, as is evident from their names; and much of the religious feeling which existed during the last century was found among them.

efficiently sustained,—in early days under the management of the late Mr. Thomas Gould and Mr. James Bryant; and lately a Day-School has been added, which promises to give increased stability to the Methodist cause in that parish.

In 1821 Torrington was the scene of another persecution—the third which had occurred there—and if not so violent in its outward demonstration it was as determined as any previous one. The circumstances were as follows:—Mr. Hackwell, of Woodland, in the parish of Little Torrington, which is separated only by a stream from the parish of Great Torrington, invited the Methodists to preach on his farm; and in response to this invitation Mr. Samuel Pearce, on the 17th of June, conducted an open-air service under the shade of a grove of trees at Woodland. On following Sabbath days similar services were held by Mr. Moase and Mr. Littlejohns, the sons of farmers residing in the parishes of Morwenstow and Woolfardisworthy. Upon this, information was laid against Mr. Hackwell for permitting preaching on his premises, and the three preachers were summoned to appear before the magistrates, and convicted in a penalty of £5 each. Mr. Pearce, being a householder of Torrington, was obliged to pay the amount, but the other two young men declined to do so, and were committed to Exeter prison. The Rev. William Beal was then in the Exeter Circuit, and warmly interested himself in the case. He discovered a flaw in the indictment, and accordingly wrote a letter to the *Alfred*, at that time the only Liberal newspaper in Devonshire. It was addressed to Messrs. Littlejohns and Moase, then in the County Bridewell, and exposed the proceedings of the persecutors. In the first of these letters, the writer remarks:—

“ I have just heard that you have been fined £5 each and committed to the County Bridewell for three months, unless the fine should be sooner paid, for having attempted to teach your neighbours the truths of the Gospel. * * * You are, I understand, the sons of respectable farmers. Against your moral character nothing can be alleged with success: your only crime appears to be your having thought for yourselves on the important subject of religion, and then having communicated your thoughts to as many of your neighbours as were willing to hear you. You did this without any intention to violate the law or to offend any individual whatever; and for this only, in the 19th century, when clergymen are ministers of justice, you are fined £5 each, and compelled to associate with vagrants and vile persons until this is paid. Sirs,—of the magistrates, if they have rightly administered justice, I now say nothing; but I pity your persecutors. I rejoice in the principles that have led you patiently to submit to this indignity; and be assured that good will arise from it to that cause for which you suffer, for persecution never fails to be subversive of its own ends and to promote that which it is intended to destroy.”

In the second letter Mr. Beal adds:—

“It now becomes high time to drag a few of these acts of intolerance which have long disgraced the vicinity of Torrington to light; * * * * the long injured rights of British Christians demand it. * * * * The usage of Mr. Drew, who was pulled from the place in which he was worshipping and most violently abused, is within the recollection of some; and of several other acts, the most intolerant in their kind, I have lately received information; but not to depend upon evidence of this nature, it is now about twelve years since I was

preaching at Torrington. Licensed myself, and in a duly licensed house, I was under the protection of British law, and ought to have been under protection of the magistrates. While engaged in the duties of religion, an infuriated mob beset the house in which we were worshipping, broke the windows, forced us into the street, and there covered us with filth, severely stoned us, and very considerably endangered our lives. When we reached the place of our abode we were not more secure: the house was assailed, and we were driven from one room to another. This riotous conduct continued until near midnight; but there were then no magistrates so tender of the laws as to volunteer to do me justice. * *

* * In your case let me call attention to a fact which will tingle in the ears of the parties concerned, and of which they are likely to hear another day. You are committed for preaching in an unlicensed house—this you say you have not done. You are committed for preaching at Little Torrington on the 17th of June, but this you say is as false as the former. It is true that Mr. Pearce preached there at that date * * * * but how came it to be thought that you all preached at the same place at the same time? You, Mr. Littlejohns, say that on the 17th of June you were at Stratton and Limston; and you, Mr. Moase, say that you were at Lane Mill and Forda! Sirs, have you never read—‘He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.’ (Job v. 12, 13.)”

On the publication of this letter, the Town Clerk of Torrington, alarmed at the position in which the bench of magistrates had placed themselves, hastened to the County Bridewell at Exeter, and requested the young men

immediately to leave the prison. They referred him to their friend Mr. Beal, who, after refreshing his memory with reference to the scenes of the former persecution in which they had both prominently figured, consented, at the earnest entreaty of the Town Clerk, to the terms on which it was proposed that the prisoners should leave their place of confinement. They were to be sent to their homes in a manner becoming Christian gentlemen, and to be remunerated for their loss of time; and it was further arranged that the fine imposed on Mr. Pearce should be returned, together with the cost of printing a number of circulars publicly making known in the town and neighbourhood of Torrington the terms on which the young men had consented to yield to this pacific arrangement.

Services were subsequently regularly held in Little Torrington, and Mr. Hackwell had his house duly licensed for preaching. A prominent opponent of the Methodists and an active agent in the persecutions referred to—Mr. John Boger—died suddenly very shortly afterwards whilst engaged in shooting, and his residence was taken by a gentleman farmer named White, who, being a Dissenter, had the house duly licensed for worship. A chapel was afterwards built, and the cause has been maintained with varying success until the present day.

The interests of Methodism in Great Torrington remained at a low ebb for many years. In 1829 and 1830, God honoured the patient and faithful labours of his servants in an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The large accession of members and the increase of the congregation rendered it necessary to provide a larger place of worship. By the zeal and Christian enterprise of Mr. Samuel Pearce a piece of land was purchased and a neat chapel erected, 56 feet by 36 feet, which was opened

for Divine worship by the Rev. John Smith, then at Barnstaple, on the 25th of December, 1832.

The progress of the work in subsequent years rendered an enlargement of the chapel necessary in 1861; it will now accommodate 450 hearers and is generally well filled. Two new school-rooms were also built at the same time, sufficiently large for 300 children. Commodious chapels have also been built in the adjoining parishes of Monkleigh, Wear-Gifford, St. Giles', where there are interesting Societies and congregations, and also in the village of Petrockstow, twelve miles from Torrington and four or five from Hatherleigh, where there is a successful cause. Measures are now being taken to form Torrington into a separate Circuit.



CHAPTER XIII.



BARNSTAPLE AND BIDEFORD CIRCUITS. REVIVAL AT BIDEFORD.

"O, 'twas a most auspicious hour,
Season of grace and sweet delight,
When Thou didst come with mighty power,
And light of truth divinely bright.
By this the blessed disciples knew
Their risen Head had entered heaven ;
Had now obtained the promise due,
Freely by God the Father given."—WESLEY.

IN the year 1826, Bideford was separated from Barnstaple, and formed into a distinct Circuit, and this arrangement commenced a new epoch in Methodist history in the North of Devon. The appointments to the Barnstaple and Bideford Circuits during the next ten years were as follows :—

1826. *Barnstaple* :—J. W. Cloake, J. Wesley Thomas.
Bideford :—James Ash.
1827. *Barnstaple* :—John W. Cloake, Charles Vibert.
Bideford :—James Odgers.
1828. *Barnstaple* :—Owen Rees, C. Vibert.
Bideford :—James Odgers.
1829. *Barnstaple* :—John Jordan, J. Floyd ; A. Weir.
Bideford :—Humphrey Parsons.

1830. *Barnstaple* :—J. Jordan, William Blundell.
Bideford :—Joshua Wade.
1831. *Barnstaple* :—William Blundell, John Smith.
Bideford :—Thomas Payne.
1832. *Barnstaple* :—John Smith, William Hayman,
(with Geo. Jaggar as assistant).
Bideford :—Thomas Payne.
1833. *Barnstaple* :—William Hayman, H. B. Trethewey, Joseph McCreery.
Bideford :—Thomas Bersey, Edward Brice.
1834. *Barnstaple* :—William Hayman, H. B. Trethewey, James Grose.
Bideford :—Thomas Bersey, Edward Brice.
1835. *Barnstaple* :—H. B. Trethewey, Wm. Mowatt, Henry Castle.
Bideford :—John Smith (of Cornwall), James Grose.

Mr. Cloake, the first Superintendent of Barnstaple, after the formation of Bideford into a separate Circuit, was earnest and evangelical as a preacher, diligent as a pastor, and was remarkable for power, both in social and public prayer. He was a man of a warm and affectionate spirit, and won the sincere attachment of his flock. Mr. J. Wesley Thomas, who is still living, was at that time a man of considerable scholastic attainments, and has since distinguished himself by producing one of the best translations of Dante's "Divina Comedia." During their ministry a steady advance was made, and the church built up.

At the period of the division of the Circuit the total number of members connected with Bideford was 180, and with Barnstaple, 275. The following is a list of the places included in the two Circuits, and the number of members in each :—

Bideford, 80 ; *Buckland Brewer*, 14 ; *Parkham*, 17 ; *Alwington*, 20 ; *Torrington*, 18 ; *Littleham*, 11 ; *Clovelly*, 10 ; *Appledore*, 10 ; total 180.

Barnstaple, 72 ; *Landkey*, 35 ; *Swymbridge*, 21 ; *Brayford*, 11 ; *Sherwill*, 3 ; *Ilfracombe*, 16 ; *Instow*, 10 ; *Fremington*, 13 ; *Southmolton*, 52 ; *Northmolton*, 12 ; *Leary and Buckland*, 20 ; *Winkleigh*, 7 ; *Chulmleigh and Burrington*, 13 ; total 275.

During the pastorate of Messrs. Cloake and Vibert preaching was re-introduced to the parish of Marwood, and a Society was speedily gathered, numbering fourteen members. At the commencement of the century the parish had been visited by the Methodist itinerant preachers, and in 1812, Blakewell appeared in the list of preaching stations. The services were held in a farmhouse, near the new Ilfracombe Road, and the Lamprey family were accustomed to embrace the opportunity thus afforded of hearing the truth, and received into their hearts that "seed of the kingdom" the growth of which was afterwards made manifest. The preaching was discontinued for some years, but was again commenced in 1827 in the village of Prieford.

The congregations were large, and the cause was sustained by several influential farmers who had experienced the converting grace of God. Among them honourable mention should be made of the late Mr. Philip Rock, and Mr. John Lamprey, of Blakewell, who, with their wives, formed the nucleus of the first class, which increased daily as God "gave testimony to the word of His grace," and soon numbered fourteen members. In 1828 the present chapel was built, and opened for Divine worship on Good Friday in that year. Sermons on the occasion were preached—in the afternoon, by the Rev. James Odgers, of Bideford, from the

text, "And I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing," &c. ; and in the evening, by the Rev. Robert Bond, then a Local-preacher in the Dunster Circuit, from Zech. iv. 10.—"Who hath despised the day of small things." Since then the cause has advanced—additions to the building have been made by the erection of a vestry and school-room, and greater accommodation has been provided in the chapel by the addition of an end gallery.

The appointment of Mr. Jordan a second time to Barnstaple, served greatly to advance the interests of Zion in that place. Possessed of excellent pulpit talents, and exemplary in his attention to his duties as a pastor, his ministry served to prepare the Church for that prosperity which subsequently marked its course. He was a man of cultivated mind and gentlemanly bearing, and commanded the respect not only of the members of his own communion but of the town generally. He paid especial attention to the youth of his charge, and took great care to instil into the minds of young converts the great doctrines of God's word, thus qualifying them for spheres of usefulness in the Church. The effect of this training is felt even to the present day. As on his previous appointment, his advent to the Circuit was the harbinger of brighter days, and he was instrumental in sowing that seed which brought forth such abundant fruit under the preaching of the Ministers who succeeded him. A few years since his son visited England as the representative of the Parliament in Queensland, to promote emigration to that colony, and addressed several crowded meetings in North Devon.

In the year 1833, the Rev. Edward Brice was appointed, as the second Minister, to the Bideford Circuit, the Rev. Thomas Bersey being the Superintendent.

From this period a still more rapid advance took place than had marked even the preceding years. Mr. Bersey, a genial, painstaking, and judicious man, was much beloved, and his young colleague, full of zeal for God, likewise won the affection of the people. The prayers and persevering efforts of a sincere and devoted people were acknowledged by the great Head of the Church in an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The chapel soon became too strait to accommodate the crowded congregations, and under these circumstances it was deemed desirable that it should be enlarged. Meetings of the principal members of the church and congregation were convened, and frequent consultations were held with a view to carry into effect some plan of enlargement; but it was found that the debt on the building then standing had greatly augmented,—that the chapel which had cost £1,600 at its opening in 1816, had now a debt upon it bordering upon £2,000. Death and emigration had reduced the Trustees to a very small number, and the responsibility of repaying the money borrowed rested principally on the shoulders of Father Rendle (referred to in an earlier chapter), who felt deeply the insecurity of his position. It was, however, resolved that a vigorous and earnest effort should be made, not only to reduce the debt, but to enlarge the chapel. It fortunately happened that the late Mr. Edward Baller, one of the Trustees, had come into possession of a house and garden adjoining the chapel, most favourably situated for effecting the enlargement. These premises he offered on very advantageous terms, together with a liberal contribution, and it was resolved at once to enter upon the work. The friends responded most cheerfully to the appeal for funds, and a sum was raised sufficient to reduce the old debt within moderate

limits, and largely to assist in meeting the cost of the new erection.

The enlargement was undertaken by Mr. Richard Heard, who is still living at a ripe old age, and was carried out in a masterly way. Another building was erected side by side with the first, and of the same dimensions, or nearly so; and the completion of the new structure was so conducted, as to necessitate the suspension of Divine Worship in the old chapel for a few Sundays only, before the partition wall was removed, and the two buildings converted into one. The enlarged chapel, which was capable of accommodating upwards of a thousand worshippers, was opened on Thursday, January 22nd, 1835; the late Rev. G. B. Macdonald preaching in the morning from Psalm lxxiii. 23—26, and in the evening from Romans viii. 7, 8. The collections on the occasion amounted to the noble sum of £132 7s. 10d. The services were very memorable ones. In the morning and afternoon the chapel was well filled in every part, but in the evening it was crowded to excess. Every corner was occupied in which standing-room could be obtained, and never probably will those who now survive forget the occasion,—how the preacher (one of the first orators among the Ministers of that day), warming with his subject as he proceeded, rose into a strain of impassioned eloquence which seemed to carry every heart with it, until a thrill of feeling found vent in an audible response throughout the vast congregation, and the preacher himself under the impulse of the moment exclaimed—"If ever I felt proud of being a Methodist preacher, it is this day!" It was computed that some 1,300 or 1,400 persons crowded into the chapel and vestries on that occasion.

Not only was this enlargement effected, and a new

Chapel Trust formed, and the property placed in good circumstances; but new Sunday-schools also became a necessity. The school which numbered about 100 scholars in 1820, had grown to 300 or 400. The School-room that had been built adjoining the chapel had to be removed to make way for the chapel enlargement; it was, therefore, resolved to build new school-rooms, capable of accommodating 600 or 700 children, on the piece of land between the chapel and Bridge-street; and under the spirited and energetic leadership of the late Mr. John How, this work also was accomplished. For many years he was the honoured and respected Superintendent of the school, and to promote its welfare, and to advance its successful working, he spared no pains. Diligent and punctual himself, he strictly enjoined punctuality and diligence on the teachers; and it is needless to say that under such supervision, the school continued to flourish, and attained great efficiency. Scholars rose to be teachers, teachers became officers in the Church, members became Local-preachers and Class-leaders, not a few found their way into the ranks of the regular ministry, whilst others filled with credit to themselves and benefit to the church positions of usefulness in the body. Since the decease of Mr. How, the school has continued to flourish, and about 650 children have now their names enrolled on its books.

Mr. Watkins, in his *History of Bideford* published in 1792, after remarking that the Dissenters of that town, who in 1762 numbered one-quarter of the population, did not then amount to one-eighth, proceeds to observe:—"There is a Methodist preaching-house of the Wesleyan denomination, but the number is very small, with little or no prospect of increase." Forty years after Mr. Watkins wrote this, and thirty years

from the appointment of Mr. Haime to this missionary sphere, that despised sect had become the predominant denomination of the town of Bideford, and religion generally had obtained an influence throughout the towns and villages of North Devon, in striking contrast to the spiritual apathy and moral degradation which previously prevailed.

The eight places in which services were held in 1826, when the circuit was first formed, have now multiplied to twenty-four, and in a very large proportion of these places, neat and commodious chapels have been erected. The chapels in the Circuit at the present time will, probably, comfortably accommodate 5,000 hearers. Reviewing the past, we may well exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" The child has outgrown its parents, the number of members in the Bideford Circuit exceeding 800, and, in days of revival, having been as large as 950 or 1,000; but anyone attempting to form an estimate of what has been accomplished by Methodism in this Circuit from these statistics would fall very short of the mark, since emigration is rife amongst the population, and it may be safely calculated that, taking one year with another, fifty members are annually lost to the Society from this cause. Numbers of the most zealous and intelligent young men, artizans, mechanics, shopkeepers, clerks, &c., are constantly moving to our large centres of industry, and, in most cases, become useful and valuable members of society in their new homes. Many hundreds have in the course of years emigrated to Canada and the United States, to Australia, and some to Africa; indeed, it would be difficult to say where the young men of this neighbourhood do not find their way. Going forth in the strength of Divine grace they become, in the large proportion of cases, witnesses

for God in the lands of their adoption ; and thus Methodism in these rural Circuits has a significance far beyond what may be inferred from the statistics furnished to the Conference from year to year. Considering the comparatively short period since the introduction of Methodism to the neighbourhood, this progress must be considered as something marvellous. It has, especially among the labourers, artisans, and the farming and middle classes of our community, exercised a most benign and salutary influence. Hundreds have been raised from a state of degradation and wretchedness to a position of respectability, who but for its influence might have been wretched and degraded still ; and these circles of influence are ever widening, as family succeeds family. Children of very poor parents trained in the Sunday-schools may now be found filling offices of great trust and responsibility, whilst others are popular Ministers in the Established Church and Wesleyan body.*

The names of many eminent Christian men who were brought to God through the instrumentality of Methodism, and who earnestly and faithfully laboured to promote its success might be enumerated, but the sketches already given of a few of the leading worthies who deserve to be held in honourable remembrance must suffice.

The hearty reception of the gospel and the pervading influence of religion in the sphere where, for a period of eighty years the Messrs. Lavington and Mr. Rooker exercised their ministry in the old nonconforming church, leads to encouraging reflections on the indirect and reflex influence of religious effort. In the Congre-

* Manuscript Notices of Methodism, by Mr. T. Evans.

gational church at Bideford, at the various periods to which our history refers, there were found many exemplary and eminent Christians who exerted a hallowed and beneficent influence in their generation.



CHAPTER XIV.



BARNSTAPLE—REVIVAL AND EXTENSION.

REV. JOHN SMITH.

“THOU shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come.”—PSALM cii. 2.

THE appointment of the Rev. John Smith to the Barnstaple Circuit, at the Conference of 1831, resulted in great and lasting good. During his ministry there was a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and large numbers were added to the Church.

A marked improvement was now manifest in the religious feeling of the neighbourhood generally. At the commencement of the century Methodism stood almost alone in earnest evangelical effort, but a general religious activity had at length been awakened, and various agencies raised up which were instrumental in dispelling that spiritual darkness which too generally prevailed.

At the time of Mr. Smith's appointment to Barnstaple, the Mr. Robert C. Chapman, who has now sustained the pastoral charge of a church in Bear-street for nearly forty years, commenced his labours in connection with the Vicarage Street Baptist Chapel. He had been a solicitor in extensive practice in London, but from conscientious scruples relinquished

the legal profession, and devoted himself wholly to the work of the ministry. By his holy walk, unwearied zeal, and Christian sympathy, he exerts to this day a wide-spread influence, and his praise is in all the churches. Associated with Mr. Chapman was Mr. Thomas Pugsley, a gentleman of Barnstaple, who had for many years practised as a solicitor, but who for similar reasons abandoned his worldly prospects, and with his excellent wife retired from the gaieties of life to reside in the parish of Tawstock, where he took the charge of a small village congregation which had been gathered by the Wesleyan body, into whose labours he entered.

The Evening Lecturer at the Parish Church (the Rev. H. M. Barnes) was an evangelical and popular preacher, and commanded large and attentive audiences. The Congregational body, too, were zealous in promoting Home-Missionary operations; and village services had been successfully commenced at Muddiford, Goodleigh, Bickington, and other places, through the efforts of the Rev. Benjamin Kent, the Pastor of the Church at Barnstaple, who was also associated with Lady Huntingdon's Connexion.

Mr. Chapman and Mr. Smith were kindred spirits, and, though differing in their theological views, laboured together harmoniously in their respective spheres to promote the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. On entering the Barnstaple Circuit, Mr. Smith found a people prepared of the Lord, and entered upon his ministerial work with characteristic zeal and energy.

Mr. Smith was born at Keighley, in Yorkshire, and his piety partook of that fervour which so distinguishes the Methodist Societies in that county. In early life he experienced a remarkable preservation from a pre-

mature grave, to which he gratefully referred in after years. He was engaged at play in his native village near where a timber waggon was undergoing repair. By some accident the prop which sustained the vehicle gave way, and it fell over with all its weight upon the lad. When he was taken up life appeared to be extinct, and all efforts to restore animation having proved fruitless, preparations were made for his funeral. At the last moment, when his friends had assembled to commit him to the tomb, the medical attendant proposed to adopt one more test to ascertain if life was really extinct. He accordingly applied his lancet, and, to his astonishment, blood immediately began to flow, pulsation and respiration followed, and in a very short time he who was supposed to be dead "sat up and began to speak." "The Lord snatched me from the very jaws of death," Mr. Smith used to remark, "and preserved me, I trust, for some good purpose."

The life thus wonderfully preserved was marked by an early and devoted consecration to the service of God. In his youth he was brought to a saving knowledge of the Truth, and soon began to "call sinners to repentance" as a Local-preacher, in which engagement he shunned no cross and feared neither difficulty nor danger so that he might be instrumental in saving souls. He was remarkable for his prudent but fearless intrepidity in reproving sin, and the happiest results followed these attempts to do good.

In 1824, Mr. Smith commenced his labours as a Christian Minister. With a strong conviction of the importance of the charge committed to him, he entered upon his work with that zeal and devotedness for which he was remarkable; and being endowed with many of the qualities of an orator he became at once an

acceptable and popular preacher. The eminently devotional expression of his countenance added a deep solemnity to the services in which he engaged, and at once impressed his auditors with the conviction that he "was an ambassador of Christ." Possessed of an exact and capacious memory his sermons were remarkable for the correctness of their delivery, and the perfect inflection of his voice gave great force to his pulpit addresses. As has been said of Whitefield, his favourite quotations gathered effect by their frequent repetition. The sublime utterances of Isaiah and vivid descriptions of the Apocalypse were delivered with telling effect, as were the poetical paraphrases of scriptural truth by Milton, Young, and others.

Mr. Smith devoted his first efforts in this new sphere of labour to the promotion of the spiritual vigour of the Church and the awakening of its members to increased earnestness in the great duty of personal consecration to God. His first text on opening his commission at Barnstaple was from 2 Cor. xiii. 9,—“This also we wish, even your perfection,”—a subject which he treated in the logical style of Wesley, and applied with great feeling and power. In his own life he maintained this elevated experience: he yielded himself “a living sacrifice to God,” and being “filled with the Spirit” he became “a vessel of honour fitted for the Master’s use.”

He was eminently a man of prayer. It was his habit to commence the Sabbath on the Saturday evening, and at the appointed hour he would come forth from his study in all the neatness of his Sunday attire and enter with peculiar fervour into the usual prayer meeting held on that evening, where his presence generally attracted a large and regular attendance. By his untiring example the members of the Church were aroused to

diligence, and all the means of grace were crowded with earnest inquirers after salvation. His zeal never flagged. On the Sabbath he was accustomed to preach three times, and to conduct a protracted prayer-meeting in the evening; whilst on week-days he was in labours more abundant—attending prayer-meetings morning and evening, or giving pious counsel and instruction to those who placed themselves under his pastoral care. As a result of these labours the careless were aroused to a sense of their danger, and large numbers were converted to God; and many eminent Christians now living date the commencement of their Christian course from the revival of religion which occurred at this period.

During the second year of Mr. Smith's ministry, Mr. Hayman was appointed to the Barnstaple Circuit, with a junior minister as his assistant. Though now feeble in body he sympathised heartily in the good work, and was instrumental in building up in the faith the numerous youthful converts who had recently joined the Societies. It may be noted that they were both united to members of the family of Mr. John Gould, referred to in Chapter III., the wife of the latter being his daughter, and of the former his granddaughter.

In his intercourse with his family, his friends, and the world at large, Mr. Smith was ever in the spirit of devotion and doing his Master's work: not that he was indifferent to passing events for he took a deep interest in the national and social topics of the day. During his residence in Barnstaple the subject of negro slavery excited a deep interest in the Christian Church.

Under a sense of its gross injustice and inhumanity, England had abandoned the African slave trade, and it was felt that she was bound, by every principle on which the odious traffic had been repudiated, to take measures

for the liberation of all those who had thus wretchedly been reduced to a state of captivity, and were held in bondage in the West Indian colonies. This feeling was further strengthened by the fact, that numbers of these, by the agency of the missionaries labouring in the islands, had become partakers of the grace of the Gospel and were members of the Christian church. Of these more than 30,000 were members of the Wesleyan Societies, besides large numbers in communion with the Baptist and other Churches. The cupidity of the planters was such that they still eagerly grasped their unlawful property, and meetings were held and petitions largely signed, which were sent to both Houses of Parliament, to strengthen the hands of those who had espoused the negro's cause. On these occasions Mr. Smith delivered several speeches, which exhibited extraordinary powers of eloquence and the feeling and deep sympathy of his heart. With equal zeal and power, he advocated the cause of Christian missions, the Bible Society, and similar religious and philanthropic institutions having for their object the glory of God and the best interests of man.

Reference has already been made to the convergence of Providential circumstances in noticing the general religious history of this period. There were many incidents in the internal history of Methodism, at this time, which are equally worthy of remark.

At the little hamlet of Churchill, in the parish of Eastdown, a poor man named Richard Blake was located for a short time. He and his wife were members of the Methodist Society, and were exemplary in their piety. Through their agency the preaching of the Gospel was introduced into the village, and large congregations were drawn to the cottage services which were held there, and which were accompanied with remarkable results.

The Truth found a lodgment in many hearts, and awakened earnest religious inquiry, which resulted in sound conversions. Among those who joined the church, which was formed there, were many of the inmates of Arlington Court, and tradesmen and others engaged on the estates. Though these converts were, in most instances, called to leave the neighbourhood, many have worthily sustained the Christian character through a protracted career, and still adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. Lady Chichester of Youlston, to whom reference has already been made in the chapter on Clovelly, favoured the evangelistic efforts put forth in the neighbourhood. Her ladyship, who made a noble sacrifice to her religious convictions, was accustomed regularly to attend the Sabbath morning service in the chapel at Barnstaple, and eventually opened a school-room which she had built at Sherwill for the Sunday and week-day services held in that village. Her personal presence, with members of her family, and the tacit acquiescence for the time of Sir Arthur Chichester, gave a prestige to the services, and, for some time, they were attended by the parishioners generally. Had the toleration hitherto accorded by the landed proprietors in the neighbourhood continued, it is probable that even a richer spiritual harvest might have been gathered.

Similar results were witnessed in every part of the circuit. Preaching was established, with some measure of success, in the village of Braunton, and a commodious chapel erected; and services were commenced in Bratton Fleming, and other villages. The number of members of Society had increased during the two years of Mr. Smith's ministry—in Barnstaple from 114 to 215; Landkey, 27 to 57; Ilfracombe, 16 to 70; Southmolton and Northmolton, 79 to 121; and the aggregate

of the Circuit, from 307 to 605 members. The advance of the cause in Ilfracombe and Barnstaple had led to steps being taken to build and enlarge the chapels in those places.

The advance of the work of God was in no place more remarkable than at Ilfracombe.

It appears from the narrative of Mr. Beal's labours, that the Methodist missionaries included Ilfracombe in their extensive Circuit at the commencement of the present century, and were accustomed occasionally to preach there with a mere shed for the accommodation of themselves and their hearers. The permanent establishment of a cause in the town, was, however, mainly due to a few Cornishmen who settled there, and formed the nucleus of a Society. Among them the name of James Harris is entitled to prominence. He was a zealous and attached member, and a devoted Christian. Preaching was principally sustained for many years by the labours of Local-preachers from Barnstaple. Many of these could not afford the expense of horse-hire, and they were accustomed to walk thither and back (a distance of twenty-two miles) on the same day, and to conduct two religious services. Mr. John Prust, still living at Ilfracombe, is a worthy representative of this earnest and self-denying band of Christian pioneers.

Up to the year 1830, the Methodist interest at Ilfracombe was feeble, and the congregation worshipped in very ineligible premises, which were, however, greatly crowded. But the providence of God interposed in a remarkable way and an opportunity presented itself for the erection of a chapel suitable to the requirements of a town, which was even then rising to some importance as a sea-side resort. William Shipperry, Esq., a gentleman

from Berkshire, possessed of landed property, and holding the position of a magistrate of that county, had while casually attending the Wesleyan ministry in London been awakened (through the honoured instrumentality of the late Rev. Josiah Hill) to deep religious concern. Having determined to break up his establishment and to abandon his former associations, he was making a tour of the south-western counties, when his attention was directed to Barnstaple Circuit as a scene of a revival of religion, whither he bent his steps in the hope that he might realise that spiritual consolation and direction which he was now earnestly seeking. He highly appreciated the ministry of Mr. Smith, and decided to settle awhile at Ilfracombe. On his first visit to the town he accompanied Mr. Smith, and was painfully impressed with the insufficient and poor accommodation afforded by the preaching-room for the crowded congregations who pressed to hear the Word of Life from the lips of a Minister whom God signally honoured, and this elicited from him the spontaneous inquiry—"Can not a suitable site be obtained on which to build a chapel?" This was addressed to Mr. Harris, and drew forth an affirmative response.

Shortly after this, Mr. Shippery returned to London, and in the same chapel in which his religious convictions were first awakened, he experienced the mercy of God, and was brought into the enjoyment of the peace and grace of the Gospel by a simple and realising faith in Christ as his Saviour. As an expression of his gratitude to God, he offered £400 towards building a new chapel at Ilfracombe, and also contributed a yearly subscription of £20 to the Circuit Fund for the support of the ministry, and subsequently set on foot a Day-school in a room adjoining the chapel for the poorer population of the

town,* of which Mr. Thomas Hillman, (who afterwards became well known as a writer on political economy, under the cognomen of the "Labourer's Son,") was the first master. With this encouragement, what has since proved a most eligible site was purchased, on which a chapel was speedily erected; and at the Conference of 1833, the Rev. Joseph M'Creery, and in 1834, the Rev. James Grose were appointed as Ministers to that town.

The members of the early Methodist Church belonged to the humbler walks of life, but there were found among them men of great Christian fervour and earnest zeal. Moses Rogers was a remarkable character. He was originally a labourer in the parish of Morthoe, but finding poverty pressing heavily upon him, in 1792 he left his wife and enlisted as a soldier in the 40th regiment of infantry. After a service of twenty-two years, chiefly in the West Indies, he was discharged, at the peace of 1814, on a pension of 12½d. per day. Having returned home to his wife (a careful and thrifty woman) and settled again in Morthoe, he was brought to a knowledge of God; and in 1831, he removed to Ilfracombe, where he was much respected. The benignity and child-like simplicity of his countenance were very remarkable. He had learnt to read, and the Bible ever lay open upon the table of his cottage. Its truths formed the subject of his constant study, and, with his hands uplifted and his face beaming with joy, he was frequently heard to praise God aloud when some fresh ray of Divine light shone upon his mind. The language of his prayer was earnestness itself,—the genial outflowing of a loving heart towards a Father in the sunlight of whose love he con-

* This school was, in after years, placed under the management of a general committee of gentlemen of the town, as a British School.

tinually dwelt. There was something poetical in his mental temperament, and as a picture of the "Good Shepherd," on the walls of his father's house, in early years affected his young heart, so in advanced age did the mysterious sublimities of the Exile of Patmos quicken his imagination and inspire his hope. His worldly means were scanty, but he was contented and happy. Persons of intelligence enjoyed a call at his cottage, which, though humble, was clean and neat, or to converse with him as he sat upon the cliffs. An interesting scene is thus pictured by a gentleman who has drawn up a sketch of his life :—

"One day I called to see him at noon. Hearing some one speaking inside the cottage, I paused at the door, which was shut. It was Moses, giving thanks to God for his dinner. Among all the acknowledgments of grace, mercy, and goodness that I have ever heard, in any rank of life, nothing has ever equalled this, so rich was the outpouring of his heart in gratitude and praise. The creature spoke to the Creator, the sinner to the Saviour, the child to his Father in heaven. It was long continued,—he never seemed to tire or to think he had praised God sufficiently. When he ceased I tapped, and receiving his invitation, I lifted the latch and went in. Moses was alone, standing at the head of his table, on which lay a single small cheese plate, containing a mixture of potatoes and greens; nothing else whatever. Here, indeed, was the utterance of a true and loving heart, in a fine, bold, manly voice. Whilst he was eating his dinner (for I had insisted that my presence should not interfere with his domestic arrangements) we conversed on the more substantial and glorious realities of the life to come."

At Ilfracombe there was then residing a poor man named William Bishop, who, though of weak intellect, had received into his heart the glad tidings of God's love to sinners in the gift of His Son, and was wont to give utterance to many remarkable sayings. Moses received this poor fellow into his house and lodged him,—what, perhaps, no one but such a Christian and an old soldier would have done. His wife, Nelly, cooked his meals and washed his clothes; and it is doubtful if, during the many years he resided under their roof, he was ever in a position to render them any remuneration for the trouble he gave them. There was another soldier connected with the first Methodist church in Ilfracombe, who was Moses' particular friend,—Alexander Redmore, one of the gallant army that effected prodigies of valour on the Plains of Waterloo. He was of rough exterior, but one who, as became his early training, “stuck to his colours,” and was a faithful soldier of Christ. He had little to contribute to the building fund of the chapel of 1833, but “he did what he could,”—he laboured by moonlight in digging out foundations for the sacred edifice, while the prayer of faith ascended to heaven.

The appointment of the Rev. Joseph M'Creery to Ilfracombe was most opportune. His ministerial career was short, but the last year of his life was one of great usefulness to the Church and much satisfaction to himself. He was an accomplished and eloquent preacher,—a young Minister of great promise. He was stationed at Ilfracombe with a view to the improvement of his health; but consumption was preying upon his vital powers, and his declining strength could not be long sustained. He rapidly sank under the influence of the insidious disease, and before the close of the year he laid down

his body with his charge, and "ceased at once to work and live." So great was the attachment cherished for him by the congregation at Barnstaple that in accordance with the general wish he was buried within the chapel there. Mr. M'Creery's funeral was largely attended, and among the assembly was Lady Chichester of Youlston, who highly appreciated his ministry, and visited him in his last illness and sought to contribute to his personal comforts as he approached his end. The Rev. James Grose proved himself a worthy successor of Mr. M'Creery, and his name is still remembered with much respect in North Devon.

The chapel at Barnstaple had now become "far too strait" for the accommodation of the increased congregations, and the necessity of an enlargement became very urgent. Great difficulties, however, presented themselves, inasmuch as the old building was burdened with a heavy debt which rested chiefly on the shoulders of Mr. Avery, and the amount of subscriptions promised scarcely warranted such an outlay as the case demanded, but the work was undertaken in faith, and carried to a successful issue.


The Rev. Humphrey B. Trethewey, the then resident Minister, zealously promoted the undertaking, and the work was carried out under his personal superintendence. It may truly be said of him that he was "in labours more abundant;" fulfilling his course as a preacher and pastor, yet promoting the material interests of Zion,—building up the spiritual house, and, at the same time, erecting a temple for the honour and worship of God.

The enlarged chapel was re-opened in 1835, when sermons were preached by the Revds. William Atherton, John Smith (of Cornwall), and John Bicknell; the former selecting for his text at the first of these ser-

vices, Mal. iii. 1, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple." It was capable of accommodating between 700 and 800 persons, and the amount raised by subscription, collection, and a bazaar, on the occasion, reached the sum of £634. The chapels, both at Ilfracombe and Barnstaple, have since been superseded by more modern and elegant structures, of which notices are given in the appendix to this work.

During the pastorate of Mr. Trethewey and succeeding ministers,* the members in the Circuit continued steadily to increase until the number exceeded 900, when steps were taken to form Southmolton and its environs into a separate Circuit. The name of Humphrey Trethewey is remembered with much respect and affection. His father was one of the early Methodist preachers in the Missionary district in which Barnstaple was included in the year 1795, and his son (Rev. Thomas Trethewey), in the third generation, represented the family name at the opening of the new chapel at Barnstaple in 1869, as one of the Ministers of the Circuit—the first Superintendent of the Ilfracombe Circuit on its division from Barnstaple.

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CHAPTER XV.



EXTENSION AND PROGRESS IN HOLSWORTHY CIRCUIT.

“A skilful workman he
In God’s great moral vineyard, what to prune
With cautious hand he knew, what to uproot
What were mere weeds and what celestial plants
Nor knew alone, but watched them night and day.”—POLLOCK.

BETWEEN the years 1830 and 1836 the western side of North Devon, including the district known as the Holsworthy Circuit, which then comprised the towns of Stratton, Kilkhampton, Bude, and Hartland, was visited by a remarkable effusion of the Holy Spirit.

At the Conference of 1835 the Rev. William Hayman was appointed to this Circuit, and thus, in the order of God’s Providence, returned to his native soil and the scenes of his youthful zeal. During the first year of his ministerial labours here, more than seven hundred members were added to the Church—the “little one” had literally “become a thousand.” Instead of the few humble cottages whose inmates welcomed the youthful evangelist in his early days, small chapels were raised on every side. “In the midst of the hamlet or the quiet hill-side,—on the borders of the moorlands or overlooking the sea, these humble sanctuaries stood as witnesses for the Truth.” There were now on the

Circuit plan forty preaching places, scattered over an area of eighteen square miles. Throughout the extensive Circuit this venerable Minister of Christ, though now enfeebled by paralysis, travelled and laboured with the cheerfulness and zeal of his youthful days to visit the numerous Societies under his pastoral charge, and to take the oversight of the multiplied flock consisting of a large proportion of youthful converts with whom God had honoured his closing ministry.

Connected with him in his first year's labours was the Rev. S. W. Christophers, who had just entered upon his commission as a Methodist preacher. Highly valuing the companionship and counsel of one whose name had been associated with his earliest recollections, he heartily and efficiently co-operated with his Superintendent in the discharge of the responsible duties connected with this large ingathering to the Church. The increasing claims for ministerial labour were amply met in the second year by the appointment of the Rev. Edward Nye, (late the Chairman of the Cornwall District,) who was instrumental in dividing this extensive Circuit into two, with the towns of Holsworthy and Kilkhampton at their head. The selection was eminently calculated to meet the exigencies of the case, and the Churches were confirmed in the grace which they had received.

At the Conference of 1837, Mr. Hayman, who was now suffering from extreme feebleness of body, retired from the itinerant work and went to reside at Bideford, the scene of his first labours as a Minister, where he was received with much kindness and sympathy. In the following January, however, he was suddenly called to his reward.

"In tracing the history of this servant of God,*

* From a sketch read at his funeral service, by his old friend and former colleague, the Rev. J. Smith, of Cornwall.

amid the varying scenes of his eventful and useful career, steadiness of purpose and decision of character stand especially prominent. Having devoted his youth to the service of God, the blessings which he personally realized he laboured earnestly to communicate to others. With a mind set on this object, first in his own neighbourhood, and afterwards more extensively as a regular Minister, he sought to bring all within his reach to a knowledge of Christ. By the diligent cultivation of his powers he became an able Minister of the New Testament. He gave a decided prominence in all his discourses to the doctrines of the new covenant and would exhibit them in all the attractive eloquence which love inspires. He greatly delighted in every part of a Methodist preacher's work. Understanding and admiring the discipline of the body, he was sometimes selected to occupy stations of more than ordinary difficulty, and by an admirable union of firmness with Christian courtesy seldom failed in promoting unity and peace in the Church."

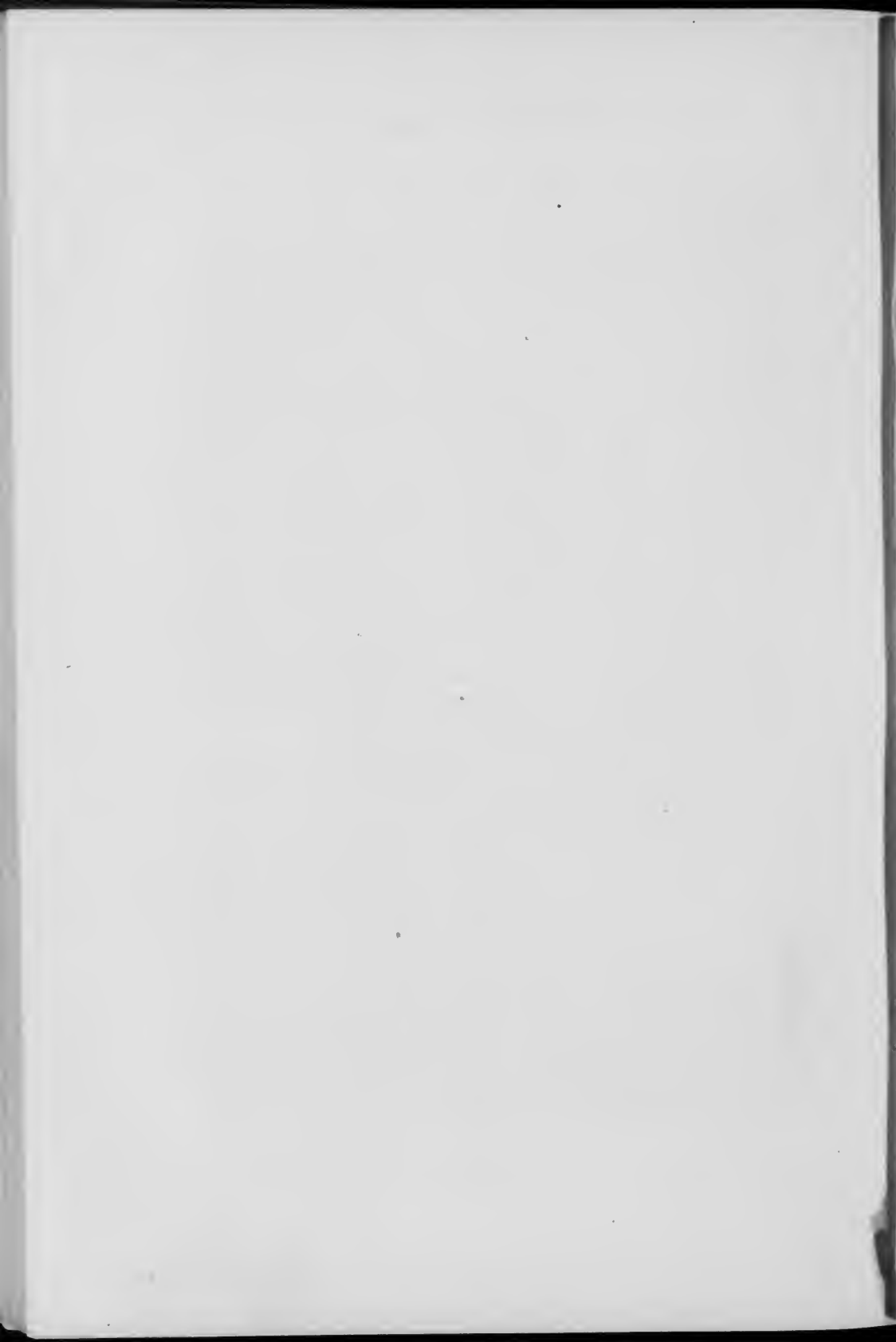
In the Wesleyan Chapel in Truro, Cornwall, in which county Mr. Hayman laboured for twelve years, a monument was erected to his memory by members of his congregation, bearing the following inscription:—"This Tablet is erected as a grateful tribute to the memory of the REVEREND WILLIAM HAYMAN, who died at Bideford, January 26th, 1838, aged 52 years. He was exemplary as a Christian and as a Minister of the Lord Jesus, and was eminent for diligence, zeal, and success. His amiable temper adorned all the relations of life, and as a friend he was most cordial and sincere. To the erection of this sacred edifice he freely contributed his counsels, efforts, and prayers, and in this town he has left an impression of his virtues which

time will not soon efface. 'The memory of the just is blessed.'"

The concluding years of Mr. Hayman's ministry afford many points of remark. The scenes of his early toil and ministerial labour were those in which he was called, in the order of God's providence, to spend the closing years of his life. He had taken an active and earnest interest in the first successful impulse received by the Methodist cause in North Devon, and was privileged to return to witness the triumph of those principles to which he had given his youthful adherence in the ingathering of thousands of souls into the fold of Christ. The concluding years of his public service proved the most successful in his ministerial career. The religious revival in which he took part was as wide spread and extensive as it was deep and genuine. Its influence pervaded the area lying between the slopes of Exmoor and the borders of Cornwall, and what now constitutes seven distinct Circuits.

In the centenary year of Methodism, the aggregate number in church fellowship with the Wesleyan body in the district numbered 3,500 members, an amount which has been sustained, but rarely exceeded since that time. This number, however, but feebly represents the results which under the blessing of God have been achieved. Large and influential religious interests have arisen which were called into active being by the efforts of those Methodist evangelists, and numbers who now swell the ranks of other communions received their first religious impressions and impulses to usefulness in connection with the various organizations of the Wesleyan Church.





SUPPLEMENTARY NOTICES.

BIDEFORD.

THE Bideford Circuit has been largely affected by removals and emigration to foreign parts. The tendency to centralization, which has prevailed during the past thirty years, has taken large numbers from this rural district to settle in the Metropolis and other large cities. The most active and promising members of the Church in this Circuit, in common with others in the country, are moving to the great centres of business or to the Colonies.

To these causes is to be attributed, rather than the decline of Methodism, the diminution of the number of members in the Circuit, compared with those returned in former years. Upon the same ground where there were formerly but two there are now three Ministers, and two Ministers' houses have been furnished. Several chapels have also been built and enlarged. The sum of £600 has been expended in renovating the interior of Bideford chapel, and a house purchased for the Minister, and subsequently enlarged and re-furnished. New chapels have also been erected at Appledore, Petrockstow, Eastleigh, Wear Gifford, Little Torrington, and at the first-named place an efficient Day-school has been established.

Recently it has been decided to make a vigorous

effort to clear off the debts from all the chapels in the Circuit, amounting to somewhere about £2,350, and this is now in a fair way of being accomplished. The effort is aided by a loan and liberal grant of the Chapel Fund Committee; one moiety of the amount has been raised and applied to this purpose, and it is confidently expected that the residue will be paid off during the present year. This being accomplished, it is probable Torrington will be formed into a separate Circuit.




ILFRACOMBE AND LYNTON.

THE erections of 1833 and 1835, at Ilfracombe and Barnstaple, as well as the old chapels at Fremington and Landkey, have been superseded by modern and elegant structures in consonance with the advancing taste in church architecture. The first effort was at Ilfracombe. The old chapel ill accorded with the other public buildings of this growing and fashionable sea-side resort, and the necessity of erecting a more modern structure was being increasingly felt by the congregation. By the untiring zeal and energy of the Rev. William Harley, the resident Minister at Ilfracombe in 1861, the foundation-stone of a new chapel was laid in 1862, by Samuel Budgett, Esq., of Bristol; and on the 5th of May, 1864, it was opened by the Rev. Henry Fish, M.A. It is a very neat structure, 55 feet by 34 feet, and will accommodate about 500 persons, whilst its roomy aisles can be made available for many more. There is also a school-room attached

which will accommodate 200 scholars. The style adopted in the traceried windows, string-courses, and turrets, is the decorated Gothic in its transitional or later period. The cost of the entire building was £1,850, but this sum must have been much exceeded but for the gratuitous services of Mr. Alexander Lauder, of Barnstaple, the Architect, who also superintended the erection. The whole of this sum, together with £320 debt remaining on the old chapel, has been raised. Towards this amount the town of Ilfracombe contributed £500 (of which Mr. W. R. Gould, the Chairman of the Local Board, subscribed £100); £300 was granted by the Committee of the Fund raised for the especial help of chapels in Watering-Places by the Rev. William Morley Punshon; and £225 from other Connexional funds. The greater part of the remainder was raised by the personal solicitations of Mr. Harley. At the Conference of 1869, Ilfracombe was separated from Barnstaple, and formed into a separate Circuit. This effort has been attended with great success, and the large attendance at the services held in the new Chapel during the summer months affords satisfactory evidence of the importance of providing suitable chapel accommodation at our favourite Watering-Places.

After an interval of nearly twenty years, a Methodist cause has again been established at the romantic watering-place of Lynton. Several of the members formerly belonged to other Circuits, and two of them were valued Local-preachers before their removal here. These, with other friends, initiated preaching services on the Sabbath, and meetings for prayer during the week, which were attended with much Divine influence. The Rev. W. P. Stapleton and Mr. John Gliddon, of the Williton Circuit, visited the place in the Spring of

1869, and a class of twelve members was enrolled, to which twelve or fourteen new converts were speedily added. The friends there have since erected a school-chapel at Barbrook Mills, about two miles from the town, and have engaged a suitable schoolmaster, who is a Local-preacher. The ineffectual efforts of the Congregational body to establish a cause, and the High-Church predilections of the resident clergyman, rendered it most desirable that efforts should be made to establish a regular ministry in this beautiful summer resort, and in 1870 a supernumerary Minister was appointed to reside there.



BARNSTAPLE CHAPEL.

THE effort of the trustees at Barnstaple in 1855, to enlarge their chapel, threw increased responsibilities on themselves and the congregation. There had been a sum of £922 expended on the chapel and school-rooms, and this, with the cost of the adjoining premises, raised the outlay to £1,622. Towards this amount, only £634 was raised, thus increasing the debt on the property from £1,535 to £2,567. The great efforts put forth, in succeeding years, to remove this incubus, by a congregation consisting largely of the working classes, evinced their strong attachment to the cause with which they were identified; and, taking into consideration the numerous other claims upon their support, displayed a spirit of liberality which has seldom been surpassed.

In 1843, £400 was subscribed by the congregation to meet a grant of £100 from the Centenary Fund.

In 1847 and 1857, further sums were raised by united and systematic efforts, reducing the debt to £1,720. In 1858, the first Loan was received from the Chapel Relief Fund of £300, to be refunded in ten years, without interest. In 1864, £400 was raised by subscription to meet a grant of £300, thus reducing the debt to £700, when a new body of Trustees was formed. In addition to these efforts, in 1850 the present Sunday-schoolrooms and vestries were rebuilt, the expense being met by a bazaar set on foot by the Teachers of the school, which realised about £300.

As years advanced, the old chapel was felt to be increasingly inadequate to the requirements of the congregation, both as to its appearance and accommodation; and on the appointment of the Rev. Alfred Mewton to the Circuit in 1867, it was resolved to erect an entirely new building. At a meeting of the members of the church and congregation, subscriptions were promised amounting to £600, and that sum was afterwards augmented by the liberal contributions of the public, (and by members of the Church of England in particular,) to £804. The Foundation-stone was laid on the 25th of February, 1868, by Sir Francis Lycett, who contributed £50 to the Building Fund.

A very successful Bazaar was held in the Music-hall in aid of the funds, which realised a gross sum of £610. The chapel was opened by the Rev. Richard Roberts on the 27th of January, 1869, and the service was attended by the Mayor and Corporation,—the first occasion in the municipal history of the borough on which the civic body had, in their official capacity, attended a Nonconformist place of worship. After the morning service a luncheon was held at the Assembly-rooms, when addresses were delivered by the Ministers and friends

present. The collections at the laying of the foundation-stone and the opening services realised £365, making the total receipts, £1,625 7s. 5d.

The total cost of the new erection and opening expenses amounted to £1,860, leaving a deficiency of only £250, a result far beyond the most sanguine conceptions of the original promoters of the object. The chapel is built in the style of the early fourteenth century gothic, and is one of the chief ornaments of the town. The internal arrangements are very tasteful and convenient, and the building will seat 900 persons.

In addition to these efforts in chapel building, in the year 1850 a Wesleyan Day-school was established, principally through the generosity and enterprise of Mr. and Mrs. Widlake. Spacious school-rooms have been erected in Gaydon Street, where 400 children are taught in the Senior and Infant Schools at a cost of about £320 per annum. Under the able superintendence of Mr. Barrow, (who has since become a clergyman of the Church of England,) and especially of Mr. Dalton, the school obtained considerable repute in the neighbourhood as an educational establishment.

The educational efforts of the Wesleyan body both here and in other towns were a remarkable success. A superior class of masters were called into the work, and the promising prospects of the various schools enlisted the hearty co-operation of numbers of equally efficient young men engaged as pupil teachers; and had the body been permitted to carry on the work they had initiated, the success would have been marked and influential. It was thought, however, that the mass of the people were in danger of being educated beyond their sphere, to the disparagement of the classes above

them; the New Code was adopted by the Government, and the children were confined more especially to the rudiments of learning. This change blighted the prospects of those who had so heartily entered on the work, and a number of able candidates for the work directed their attention to other pursuits. The Day-schools at Barnstaple and Appledore still sustain much of their vigour, but that at Southmolton has been suspended.

About the same time that the foundation stone of Barnstaple Chapel was laid, Mr. Mewton had the honour of initiating another movement for the erection of a new chapel at Landkey; and on the 26th of March, 1868, the foundation stone of the building was laid by Mr. William Brock, of Exeter, who contributed £20 to the building fund. The chapel was opened on the 6th of January, 1869, by the Rev. John Harding, of Pembroke (the former Superintendent of the Circuit); and Mr. Thomas Ensor presided at the evening meeting. It is one of the neatest and most effective village chapels in Devonshire. It is built in the style of the middle-pointed period of Gothic architecture. The internal arrangement of the chapel is very beautiful, its striking feature being the fine open-swept roof. The total cost of the building was £900, and the congregation came forward with great liberality to meet the outlay, the subscription list being headed by a donation of £100 from Mr. Walter Tucker, of Bath, as an acknowledgment of the benefit he received in his youthful days in the Sabbath-school connected with the chapel. The school-rooms at the side, and the vestries and burying-ground behind, make this most complete chapel premises such as are seldom equalled.

Since the opening of the chapel efficient Day-schools

have been established for the education of the children, which promises greatly to promote the interests of the body in that and the neighbouring villages. Much of the success which has attended these various chapel erections is due to the valuable co-operation and liberality of the Architect, Mr. Alexander Lauder, who, in addition to generous donations, rendered his professional services in each case gratuitously.

SOUTHMOLTON.

IN 1846 Southmolton was detached from Barnstaple, and formed into a separate Circuit, since which preaching has been introduced into many of the surrounding parishes.

The old cause at Brayford maintains much of its early vigour and efficiency, and new chapels have been erected at Chittlehampton, where there are now twenty members; at Roseash, where there is an influential country cause, with thirty-five church members; in West Anstey, with twenty-five members; and at Bishopsnympton, Heasleigh Mills, and other places, numbering fifteen in all.

The Rev. T. H. Walker was the means of introducing Methodism a second time into Bishopsnympton, and his reception was more encouraging than that accorded to the early preachers, who, on visiting the place, were roughly assailed and introduced to their labours amidst the clangour of pots and tin kettles. A neat chapel has lately been built in the village and at Newtown,

and the Society numbers between twenty and thirty members.

At Heasleigh Mills, also, in the parish of Northmolton, a very tasteful chapel and school-rooms have been erected at a cost of £346, and an interesting cause established; but in Northmolton itself, which had the honour of entertaining the Wesleys and the early Methodist preachers,—the Mother Church of North Devon, which formed for many years the focus of a widely extended influence,—the chapel is unworthy of the ancestral repute of the village.

In the Circuit town, from the decline of the staple trade and other causes, the Society and congregation have decreased, the former now numbering only forty, being less than one-half of the numbers formerly attached to the Church. It has been remarked that the multiplication of small sects is one of the evils and weaknesses of Protestantism; and the evil is the greater in proportion as the separate bodies approach each other in their views on doctrine and discipline. It is not often that a town with so small a population as Southmolton is found to contain so many denominations. In addition to the Established Church and the old Congregational cause, there are three bodies of Methodists and two Baptist Churches, making a total of seven places of worship to supply the spiritual wants of a population of three thousand, a number which is on the decline rather than increase. In this state of things the Dissenting communities weaken each other, while the Church of England is gathering strength and efficiency.

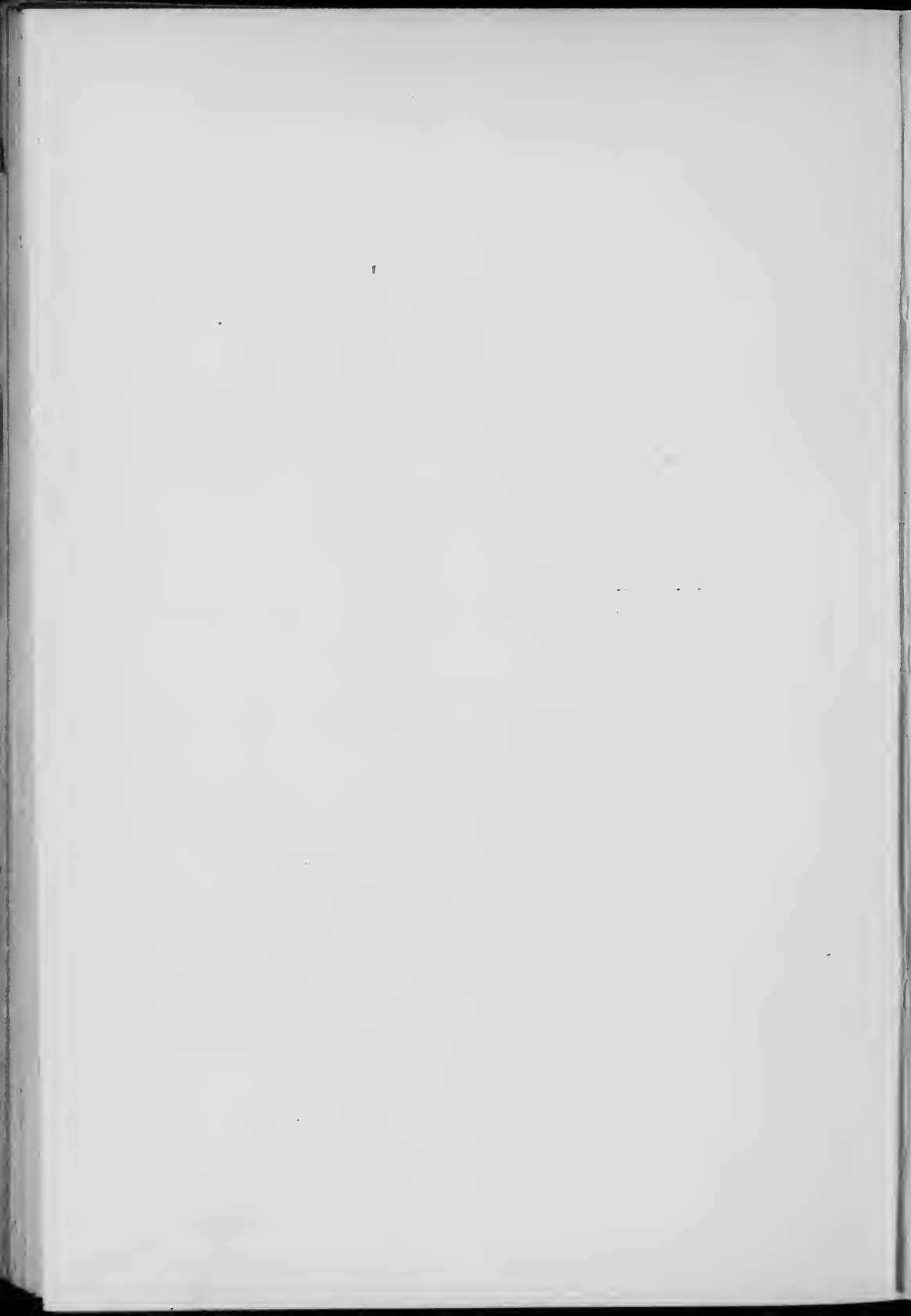
Southmolton Circuit has, during the past fifteen years, supplied as many as five Ministers, who are now labouring efficiently in the Wesleyan body. A long list is also furnished by the other Churches in the town, of

Ministers or Ministers' wives who have laboured with marked efficiency in the home and foreign fields of Christian enterprise.

The Day-school in connection with the chapel was built in 1850, mainly by the energetic exertions of the Rev. James Sutch, and with the cordial co-operation of Mr. Abraham Kingdon, for many years treasurer of the school. It has been of essential service both to Methodism and other Christian denominations, but through the great reduction of the Government grant, and the falling off of subscriptions, the school is now closed.



SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES, 1897.

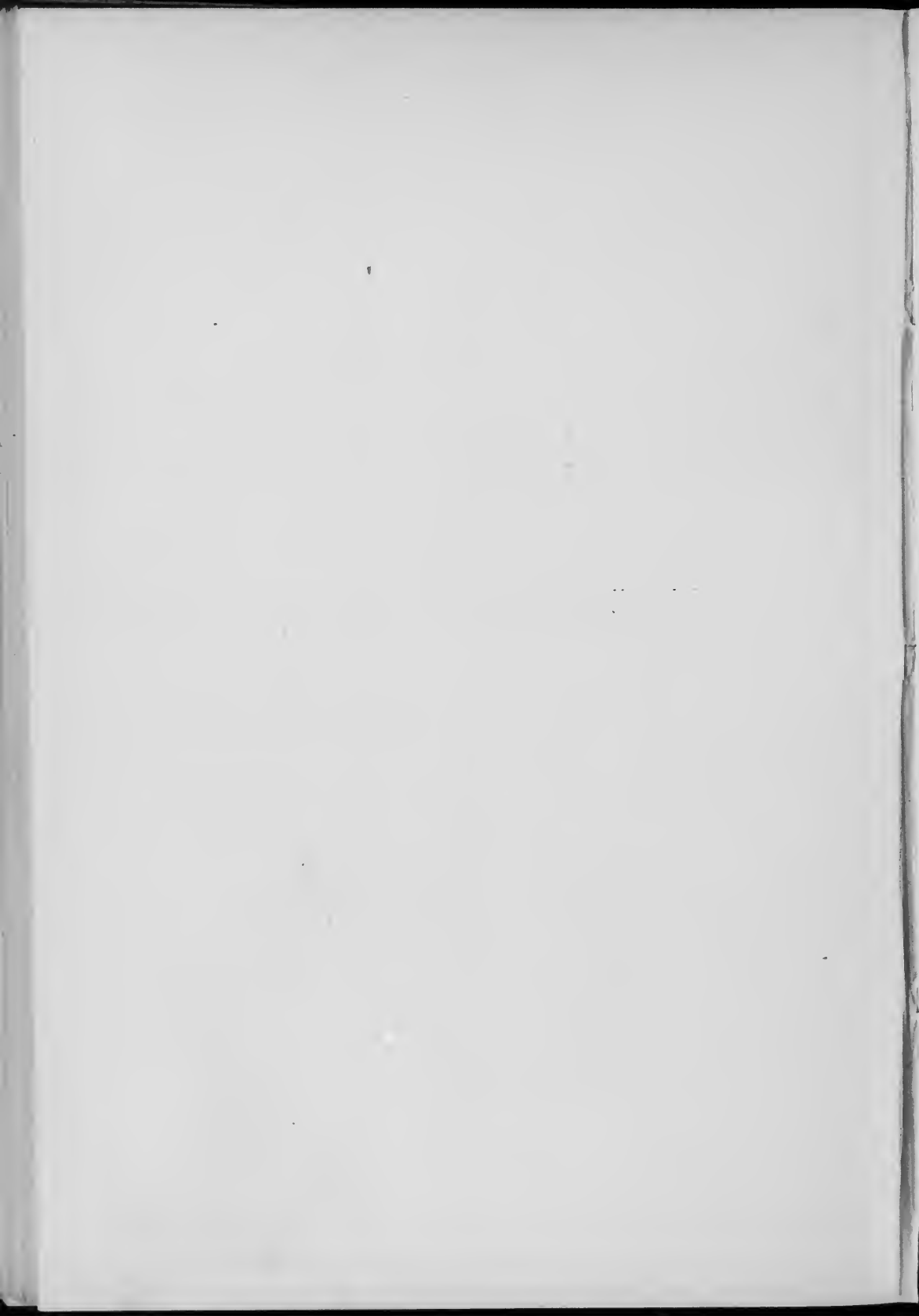


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During the first fifty years of pioneer work described in the earlier portion of this History (pp. 27-60), the North Devon Circuit extended from Columpton and Northmolton to Clovelly and Hartland, and included an area of nearly sixty square miles. In this immense district not more than three, or sometimes four, itinerant preachers were engaged, and they had to undertake the pastoral charge of both town and country stations. In 1802, in view of the Arian tendencies of the Nonconforming Churches (p. 10), Dr. Coke, accompanied by Mr. Jordan, made a tour of the district, and from that year the Methodist



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cause in the towns of Barnstaple, Bideford, Southmolton, and Torrington dates, the whole being comprised under the title of "The Barnstaple Circuit" (pp. 120-130).

Looking back over nearly a century which has elapsed since the date of Dr. Coke's visit, the rapid spread of religion and the growth of the Methodist Churches in North Devon is strikingly apparent. The following is a list of the towns now included in what is generally regarded as the district of North Devon, with the period of their formation into separate Circuits, and the present number of Church Members :

	Constituted a Circuit.	Number of Church Members.
Barnstaple ...	... 1811 ...	... 560
Bideford ...	... 1826 ...	... 602
Southmolton ...	... 1846 ...	... 320
Ilfracombe ...	... 1869 ...	.. 240
Lynton ...	... 1884 ...	... 108
Torrington ...	... 1888 ...	... 152

In addition to these there are 1,300 members attached to the Methodist Churches in Holsworthy, Kilkhampton, and Okehampton, which, geographically, belong to the district. The Bible Christians (another branch of the Methodist Church), also have a Church membership in the above six Circuits of 1,000 and of nearly 1,200 at Kilkhampton and Holsworthy ; not to forget the earnest labours of the Salvation Army. The numbers of the Congregational and Baptist Churches

are not now tabulated, but the labours of both have been attended with an equal amount of success and general prosperity.

BARNSTAPLE.

In reviewing the material advance of Methodism in North Devon, it is worthy of note that in Barnstaple the chapel was enlarged three times, and subsequently re-built, the present edifice accommodating a congregation of about 1,000 (p. 187). The Church premises have also been greatly extended. A large central hall for Sunday School and week-day services has been erected, together with commodious class rooms and vestries, and ample provision, in every department, for the requirements of the Church. New chapels have also been erected at Landkey (p. 189), Fremington, Braunton, Knowle, Marwood (p. 154), and more recently, at Swymbridge, where preaching was established in the early years of Methodism (pp. 99 and 128).

BIDEFORD.

At Bideford, elegant and commodious Church premises have been erected, adjoining the site of the former chapel (p. 156). The new building is eighty feet in length by fifty-one in breadth, and contains nearly 1,500 sittings. The old building has been converted into a spacious hall for Sunday School and week-day services, and supplemented by convenient vestry and class rooms. The entire cost was about £6,000, of which nearly £4,000 was raised.

TORRINGTON.

Torrington was separated from the Bideford Circuit in 1888. Among the country churches which form a part of it, Wear Gifford still maintains a measure of its former vigour; but the church at Petrockstow, situated about eight miles from Torrington, is the largest and most promising country station in the Circuit. There are chapels also at Monkleigh, St. Giles, and Little Torrington.

SOUTHMOLTON.

The Southmolton Church, which is handsome and commodious, was built in 1883. The style of the building, which superseded the old chapel erected in 1821 (p. 145), is Geometrical Gothic. The elevation is very effective, and accommodation is provided for 400 worshippers. There is a spacious vestry in the rear, communicating with the commodious school and class rooms. At Chittlehampton, in this Circuit—the retreat of the Puritan worthies in the seventeenth century (p. 104), where no conventicle was tolerated for 200 years—a chapel was opened in 1865, and enlarged in 1887. At Northmolton, also—first visited by the Wesleys in 1750 (p. 23), and the seat and centre of Methodist influence in North Devon in the last century—a new chapel was erected in 1891, under very auspicious circumstances. Chapels have also been opened at Roseash, West Anstey, Heaseley Mills, Bishopsnympton, and Newtown.

ILFRACOMBE.

The new church at Ilfracombe was erected in 1898, on a site acquired from the town authorities at the bottom of Market Street. It is an elegant Gothic structure with a spire, and is a worthy addition to the public buildings in this popular and growing summer resort. On the ground floor provision is made for the Sunday School, and every convenience for public and other services. The church accommodates about 650 worshippers. Chapels have been opened at the rising summer resorts of Combmartin and Morthoe; also at Bradwell Mills, Lee, and Chambercombe.

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LYNTON.

In 1869, a Methodist Church was re-established at Lynton, after a lapse of thirty years. Several members had settled there, and under the auspices of the late Mr. Gliddon, of Williton, regular services were commenced, and twelve members enrolled. In 1870 a Supernumerary Minister went to reside at Lynton, and it became attached to Barnstaple, a distance of twenty miles, from which it received regular supplies of local preachers. In 1871 a chapel was built at Barbrook Mills, about one mile from the coast, largely through the co-operation of the farmers residing in the neighbourhood. It accommodates 200 hearers, and underneath is a convenient school-room in which both Day and Sunday Schools are efficiently conducted, and well supported by the scattered population of the

locality. In order to secure a resident minister at Lynton, with a yearly grant from the Connexional Funds, it became necessary to erect a chapel adapted to the requirements of that beautiful summer resort, and make it the head of a Circuit. This arrangement was completed in 1884, when the chapel and commodious minister's house adjoining were built. In connection with the Lynton Circuit services are now held at Eastdown, Kentisbury, Parracombe, and Brendon, which are supplied every alternate week by preachers from the Barnstaple Circuit.

